Daniel Everton
Volunteer-Regular

by

Israel Putnam

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Mercedes

(See page 113)

DANIEL EVERTON

VOLUNTEER-REGULAR

A Romance of the Philippines

BY

ISRAEL PUTNAM

ILLUSTRATIONS BY SEWELL COLLINS

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To My Wife

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ILLUSTRATIONS

PAGE

MERCEDES . . . . . *Frontispiece*

"I AM SORRY TO HAVE PUT YOU TO THE INCONVENIENCE OF A SECOND CALL," HE SAID . . . 88

DANIEL EVERTON KNEW WHAT THE WRITING OF THE LETTER HAD COST 174

"WELL?" SHE SAID, QUIETLY; "WHY DON'T YOU GO ON?" 370

CONTENTS

CHAPTER	TITLE	PAGE
I	Benita Llopis	1
II	At the Café of Señor De La Rama	16
III	José Mispall Plays Monte	31
IV	Two Patriots Plan a Campaign	52
V	One Casualty	62
VI	Marshall Everton Receives a Call	79
VII	A Breach of Trust	100
VIII	Mercedes	111
IX	Señor Isidro Gives a Ball	125
X	The MacTavish Bungalow	150
XI	The Price of a Reputation	171
XII	Mrs. Cartwright Makes the Tea	180
XIII	The Arrival of the "Isla de Tablas"	191
XIV	Fort Malate	221
XV	An Unseen Barrier	238
XVI	A Social Verdict	257
XVII	Perplexity	275
XVIII	Sunset	282
XIX	Sergeant Cassidy Makes a Discovery	299
XX	Benita Takes a Hand	317

CHAPTER	TITLE	PAGE
XXI	Colonel Cartwright Tries an Experiment	326
XXII	News from Negros	350
XXIII	Constance	365
XXIV	On the Slopes of Canaloan . . .	377
XXV	Marshall Everton	393
XXVI	Conclusion	405

Daniel Everton, Volunteer-Regular

Chapter I

BENITA LLOPIS

IT was past four o'clock of a sultry day toward the close of the dry season. The cooling breath of the southwest monsoon, sweeping from Borneo and the islands of the Sulu Sea, had, during the earlier hours of the day, struggled in vain to make headway against the heat of the tropical sun. But now, as the day declined, there was a marked change in the atmosphere. The blistering rays of noon-day removed from the moist earth, it began to cool and the air took on a delicious freshness.

The afternoon drill was over, and several soldiers had thrown themselves upon the earth in the shade of a grove of cocoa-palm trees. From their position

they could watch the tiny breakers creep closer with the rising of the tide, and see the sparkling waters of the Straits stretching away to the rugged, mountainous coast of Panay.

The home mail had come in that morning, and most of the men were reading their long-delayed and long-watched-for letters. One of them, however, was diligently perusing the columns of a newspaper two months old. He had no letters. After twelve years in the ranks of the army, a man's correspondence is apt to drop off. As he read, his heavy, Irish jaw worked steadily, and from time to time he would glance aside, select some unoffending twig or palm leaf as a target, shower it with tobacco juice, and return to his paper.

"Ar' you aware, Redder," he asked at length, breaking a silence which had lasted several minutes, "that there's to be no more canteen in th' army?"

The one addressed withdrew from his mouth, concealed behind a heavy blond beard, the pipe he was smoking, and looked at the speaker with a pair of large blue eyes. His was a mind not over quick at grasping new facts, and for a moment he hesitated.

"Who said dot?" he inquired at length.

"I did. It's here in th' paper. No more canteen. They considers it a kayrupter av our morals."

"You haven't got any morals," said Redder, somewhat irrelevantly, it must be admitted. "Where's d' beer comin' from if dey don'd hef no gandeen?"

"Nowheres, av coorse. That's the p'int. Your to be absint without lave an' dhrink whisky if you must dhrink. But if, after servin' twilve years in th' army, you can abstain taytotally, you'll be permitted to go into a tint to be erected on th' Post primises, and play tiddle-de-winks an' drink ginger-beer. That's how th' Young Min's Christian Association 'll learn you to fear Gawd an' lick th' enemy. It tells all about it in th' paper here."

"Who sed so?"

"I say so, you wooden-head, an' so does th' newspaper!"

"De baber don'd boss de army, an' neider do you —excebd de awkvard squad. Who makes dis foolishness?"

"Th' Gawd-fearin' taytotallers in Congress, av coorse."

"Do you mean to tell me sooch a law iss made py men?"

"I do—spurred on an' applauded be th' W. C. T. U. Woman's Childish Timperance Uselessness, I think it stands for."

Sergeant Redder replaced in his mouth the meer-

schaum pipe—to which he still adhered despite the cheapness of the Manila perfectos with which his companions were regaling themselves—and smoked silently. He looked out over the waters of the Straits of Guimaras at a *parao* which was gliding swiftly by, the rays of the setting sun striking its white sails and turning them a claret red. Upon its starboard outrigger stood a picturesque native who had gone out there to ballast the queer craft as it flew rapidly along in the direction of Iloilo.

"Ah wish ah war on thata thing, goin' back to the States," said a long and lanky private, who hailed from the mountains of Tennessee.

"Do you indade?" said Cassidy, laying his newspaper aside and biting a large piece from his plug of tobacco. "An' it's mighty saysick you'd be before you got there. What's more, when you do get home, it'll be the foine warm wither an' th' tuba av' th' Phillipeens you'll be thinkin' av."

"If dey busd up de gandeen," continued Redder, who had been thinking of the matter in his own thoroughly slow and slowly thorough way, "ve'll haf to drink someding, an' most off de men 'll drink diss bino stuff de vimmin sells, vot seds you grazy."

"Anny wan wud think, Sergeant Redder," said

his friend, "that you knew more about th' army than what th' W. C. T. U. does. They've studied th' subject most thoroughly an' have writ innumerable pamflits on it. You couldn't write a pamflit on anything, so you'd better shut up."

"Vel," said Redder, "if dey busd up de gandeen dey'll haf trubble, dat's all."

"An' what do they care, if they do have more min before a Gineral Court-martial? You see th' way they look upon th' matter's like this: They think thot anny man who'd defile hisself wid drinkin' beer in what they calls th' canteen saloon is av no use in th' army. So they sez, 'Let him go to hell his own way,' an' chuck 'im out. What they want in th' army is taytotallers. It ain't your gettin' drunk alone that they kick about; it's your drinkin'. If you so much as tooch a glass av beer, you're a miserable onclean heathen, an' th' sooner you finish up th' job an' drink yourself t' death th' better."

"Ah doan' see," said the Tennesseean plaintively, "what right the Congress have got to stop the canteen thata way."

"Yer lamintably ignarant av th' laws, thin," retorted Cassidy, expectorating scornfully. "Congriss cud wipe out th' hull army with a sthroke av its pen—if it wanted to."

"Ah wish they would, then. Ah wouldn't kick, fer one."

"De gandeen's de vun ding vot made life vordth liffin' out en dem Vestern posts," said Redder, refilling his pipe.

"Ah!" snorted Cassidy, "they make me tired. They're worse than Christian Scientists."

"What ah Christian Scientists?" asked the man from Tennessee.

"They're more ole wimmin an' some men that believe that when you've a bullet through your bowels, th' only thing the matter wid you is meelankolia."

"Do you mean dot dey vos grazy?" inquired Redder.

"Oi don't know, I'm sure. I think they must be. I do wish, Redder, that you'd read th' newspapers. Your ignorance is onexcusable."

"I don'd vont to read aboud sooch damn nonzenze. I'd rader read de drill pook."

"Oi don't know as I blame you, but there's more in th' papers than Christian Science. I believe in sipparatin' th' wheat from the chaff."

As Cassidy finished speaking he folded up the paper and put it in his pocket. "What do you think of the news, Everton?" he asked, addressing one of the men who was gazing idly off to sea, his campaign

hat drawn down well over his bronzed forehead to shade the clear gray eyes. Everton did not hear the question apparently, for he made no reply. A silence fell upon the little group, which was broken after a time by the faint notes of a distant bugle call.

"There goes first call," said Cassidy, resignedly.

"Ah wish it war Gabriel's horn," replied the man from the mountains of Tennessee.

"That'll come soon enough, never fear," said Cassidy, soothingly. "You'd better come on now an' be drilled by thot new lootenant what came in with th' mail this mornin'. If he knows 'fours right' from 'about face' I lose my bet. So long, Everton."

"So long, old man," replied the tall soldier, coming out of his reverie as his companions moved away toward the clearing. "See you at supper."

As the men passed from sight behind a nipa shack, the one who had been addressed as Everton arose and stretched himself luxuriously. Having relieved in a measure by this process the cramped stiffness in his lower limbs, he turned toward the sea and walked out upon the broad, white beach.

He was the only one of the men who had worn a coat despite the heat of the day, and the brass but-

tons thereof had been polished until they shone. It was apparent that the blouse itself had undergone some alterations since leaving the Quartermaster's Department, the native tailor who lived in a one-room shack behind the old convent, used now as a military barracks, having altered it to fit the well-made frame of the owner. His leggins were new, and he had a neat, well-groomed appearance which was in contrast to most of his company. Cassidy and the others, when off duty, were prone to adopt what the Irishman called "the real field uniform of the United States—a blue shirt, canvas pants, and shoes, if ye have them."

It only was in this scrupulous exactness about his dress that Daniel Everton had shown to his comrades during the two years he had spent among them, that he had come into the ranks from a different world than theirs. He was a good soldier, and this had been his passport to their confidence and esteem. For the rest, it mattered little whether or not he was what the world ambiguously calls a gentleman—he was Private Everton to them, until by dint of merit alone he became Sergeant Everton. The military world is an ideal social world in certain respects. In it a general is no more and no less than a general, a corporal no more and no less than a corporal. The

position of each is fixed by his commission or warrant, as the case may be, and that settles the matter.

Everton turned southward and walked along the beach. The sun had set, and above the violet, dreamy outline of the Panay shore hung great banks of mackerel clouds, their lower edges a splendid crimson; their crests a soft opal fading away into a sky of Prussian blue, across which the summer lightning played constantly.

Northern sunsets suggest tenderness; those of the tropics—passion. During the two long and weary years which he had spent amidst uncongenial surroundings his appreciation of the beautiful in nature had been a great compensation to this young soldier, making up to him in no small degree for the lack of those other resources which he had had before his enlistment.

He sat upon an overturned *parao*, looking out across the waters, which had changed their blue for the gorgeous coloring of the sky, and puffing lazily at the cigar which he had lighted. The whole world seemed to have been touched and glorified by the brush of the Great Artist. Even the bamboo huts of the fishermen, dirty and commonplace as they were by the full light of day, had absorbed in a measure the soft coloring of the sea and sky,

which fell like a mist upon the low shore, bringing out the clusters of orange-colored cocoanuts against the green background of the waving palms.

As he sat there he heard the shrill scream of a woman, and turning, beheld a grotesquely pathetic little tableau.

A few yards from where he sat a small river flowed into the sea. Upon its banks were tall clumps of bamboo brake, in which the wild pigeon, settling for the night, cooed softly. Banana and dwarf palm trees crowded each other about their bases in luxuriant profusion, and in the rear the forest of cocoa trees stretched away inland toward the town. The light was fading rapidly, and the little group of women who had been washing their clothes beside the stream, and had gathered them up into wet heaps, were transferring them to their owners' baskets.

There was one man in the party; a short, black native with a round head and massive shoulders. A dispute had apparently arisen between him and one of the women as to the ownership of a dilapidated old shirt. Each had a firm grip upon it, and in the tug-of-war which ensued it seemed as though a division of the garment was inevitable. The woman was old, toothless, and very ugly, and as she strug-

gled to wrest the shirt from the man's grasp she abused him shrilly.

Everton watched the little tableau with amusement, until the man, incensed by the taunts of the other women, gave way to his passion, and raising a clenched fist struck his adversary across the mouth. At this the others, who had shown no disposition to take sides before, being content to urge both on with good-humored derision, were savagely indignant. They crowded around the man and heaped upon his head a veritable torrent of abuse. What would be but a gentle shower of abuse in any civilized language, became a torrent when poured forth in the harsh, uncouth dialect of the Bisayas. A dozen thin, brown arms were stretched forth to interfere, when Everton, stepping quickly into the center of the group and grasping the native by the back of the neck with one hand, wrenched the shirt from his grasp with the other.

"You brute!" said the American, as he shook him.

The native wriggled from his grasp with the agility of a reptile, and drawing from beneath his flowing white shirt a short knife, made a lunge at the soldier's chest. Everton easily caught the uplifted arm, and gave it a twist which caused his opponent to drop the knife with a sharp cry of pain.

A cackle of laughter ran around the circle of old crones at this, and when he had shaken off the soldier's arm the native turned and ran swiftly across the shallow river, jumping from stone to stone. Everton made no effort to follow him, but stood watching the lithe figure as it gained the opposite bank and disappeared among the trees.

"Runs better than he fights," was the soldier's mental comment as he stooped and picked up his late adversary's knife. It was a very pretty specimen, with a handle made from the horn of a *caribao* and quaintly carved. He slipped it into his belt, and turned to find that the women were hoisting their baskets upon their heads and moving off toward the village. A few of the younger ones ventured a bright glance of admiration at the victor in the recent struggle as they raised their gayly-colored skirts and waded across the shallow river, picking their way gingerly along its pebbly bottom, and so affording him a glimpse of their pretty ankles. At last all were gone except the old woman who had figured as the heroine in the little affair, and who lingered as though wanting to speak to her protector. He drew a peseta from his pocket and tossed it to her, saying in Spanish: "Cheer up, you are all right now."

To his surprise, she did not clutch at the coin as he had expected her to do, but let it lie on the sand where it fell, and throwing herself at his feet clasped his knees with her bony arms. She caught one of his brown hands, and drawing it to her emaciated breast kissed it, wetting it with her tears.

Everton was one of those men who dislike being thanked for a kind act as much as they like to render one. A dark flush crept up behind his bronzed skin, and he drew back hastily.

"Don't do that," he said. Then, stooping, he helped her to her feet. For a moment they stood facing each other, while the brilliant, vivid tints in the west faded to a dull red. A strange destiny had brought these two together, and, could he have known the importance this meeting was destined to assume in his life, he would have shrunk from her appalled. As it was, he saw only what appeared to him to be the ugliest human being he had ever beheld.

She was indeed ugly. There is nothing more so than an old woman of one of the Southern races, which age young. As she stood there, the tears streaming down her leathery brown cheeks, she made a pitiable example of what the weaker sex can come to be in old age, when years of manual labor have been added to the other and harder burdens which

fall to a woman's lot. Her thin lips were drawn back over nearly toothless gums, and showed two long, yellow teeth, which divided and gave her a half-savage, animal appearance. The head was crowned with a mop of thin, grayish-black hair, and her cheeks were sunken, as though she had been dead some days.

"My name," she said at last, speaking Spanish fluently, from which he rightly inferred that she was a servant in one of the wealthy native families, "is Benita Llopis, and as long as I live I shall pray for you and be grateful to you."

"Thanks," replied Everton hastily, for he saw that she was on the verge of more tears and demonstrations of gratitude. "Did the man hurt you?"

"No."

"If he tries to strike you again come and tell me, I am the American quartermaster-sergeant here."

"A thousand thanks, Señor."

As she spoke, the first call for retreat sounded, and the sergeant turned to go. Stooping, he picked up the peseta and handed it to her. She took it and put it carefully away in the folds of her *peona* waist.

"Adiós," said Everton, as he turned on his heel and walked briskly up the beach. When he came

to the road which leads up toward the plaza he stopped and looked back.

The sky in the west was growing dark, and the mountains on the Panay side were barely discernible. Above the island of Guimaras a few fleecy clouds floated in the evening air. They were still glowing with the rosy colors which had faded into dusk in the lower atmosphere. Owing to its altitude, the volcano of Canaloan caught the last rays of the sun, now far below the horizon, and for a moment reared a violet-crested peak above the evening shadows which had fallen upon the lowlands and the sea. The sound of the tide, just beginning to ebb, was borne to Everton's ears, and as he peered into the gloom which had enshrouded the river bank he could just distinguish the bent form of old Benita crouching by her basket on the dark sands.

Chapter II

AT THE CAFÉ OF SEÑOR DE LA RAMA

THE island of Negros is so close to Panay that at night, when there is no moon and the southwest monsoon blows freshly, parties of insurgents can steal out in their swift *paraos* from the rivers and inlets along the Panay shore and cross to one of the coast towns of Negros in less than two hours.

Few sail are to be seen on the usually quiet waters of the Straits. Sugar *lorchas*—large, ungainly schooners, which carry the brown wealth of Negros in its crude form to the warehouses and godowns of Iloilo—have almost a monopoly in the marine landscape. At intervals of days, the smoke or low black hull of a tramp steamer may be seen, hugging the Panay shore on her way to or from the outer world.

The eastern coast of Negros presents to the lover of nature a shore line of exceptional beauty. From Victorias and Seravia on the north to Sumag on the south, the coast is fringed with a deep forest of cocoa

palms. Behind this belt the ground slopes gradually to the mountains, some twenty-five miles inland. Between these mountains and the sea are fields on fields of fertile sugar lands, broken by groves of palm, bamboo, and banana trees. Watered most plentifully by several large rivers, which wind their tortuous courses from the upland gorges at the base of Canaloan through rich hacienda lands and forests of rare woods to the Straits, this narrow belt of coast country holds as rich sugar lands as any in the world.

On a promontory on the eastern coast of Negros, near the narrowest part of the Straits, is situated, about two miles inland, the pueblo of Silay. Like most of the towns of the Philippines, it has little to boast in the way of architectural beauty. A score of houses of the more pretentious, two-story type, a few others built of nipa, with tall thatched roofs and sides of interlaced bamboo; a few streets which deteriorate into rough trails a hundred yards or so beyond the limits of the town, and one broad highway running north and south, connecting Silay with the other coast pueblos—these sum up the municipal pretensions of the populous little village.

Upon its main street, fronting the Plaza, one Pedro de la Rama has in times past set up a business

in wines, groceries, and tobacco. The front of his little shop contains three or four chairs, very much the worse for wear, and a table just strong enough to support a half-dozen bottles of beer. This department of the establishment had been christened by one of the American soldiers the "de la Rama Café," and it was here that the officers of the Silay detachment were wont to congregate when not actively engaged in their official duties or in calling upon the pretty little señoritas of Silay.

On an afternoon in the month of April, 1899, three men occupied the café. Two were American officers, and the third was Señor José Mispall, the owner of a hacienda up country, and the wearer, on the occasion when we make his acquaintance, of a large yellow-diamond ring. One of the officers was addressed by his companion as Lieutenant Taylor, the other was a Captain of Volunteers by name of Blanchard. The latter was a newcomer to the Philippines, and his failure to participate in the conversation of the others was due to his ignorance of what Taylor called "King Alfonso's pure Castilian." The latter, who was temporarily in command of the detachment at Silay, paused with a glass half-way to his lips, and said, addressing Mispall:

"Señor José, I hear that there is to be a game of monte at the house of our friend Isidro Paris this evening."

"Sí, Señor," replied Mispall, his small, black eyes brightening. "Shall you go?"

"What are you two chinning about?" interrupted the Volunteer captain, who had come to Silay that morning on his way north to one of the smaller coast towns.

"We are talking about a monte game at the house of Isidro Paris to-night. Want to go?"

"Well, rather. You can count me in if there is to be any fun," rejoined Blanchard, twirling his blond mustache and casting a side glance at two pretty *mestizas*, who were passing down the street outside. "Do these people gamble much?"

"Wait and see," Taylor answered with a laugh. "When I first came here I went to one of their games one evening expecting to break the bank. I was flush at the time, as I had been up in the woods for two months, and had three months' pay in my pocket. Well, when I got there, I found that these 'dagos,' as I then regarded them, were playing six or seven thousand dollars on a card. So I didn't play."

Blanchard was interested. In the little town in

Illinois from which he came he had conducted a boot and shoe business on a small scale. It happened that his pay as a Captain of Volunteers was the largest income he had ever received. As a rule, however, he didn't state this fact, but talked of the sacrifice he had made in a pecuniary way in taking his commission.

"Do you mean to tell me that niggers like our friend here can afford to play like that?"

"No, I don't," said Taylor. "I don't know many people who can afford to play as high as that. But they do play high, whether they can afford it or not. And don't be offended, Blanchard, if I give you a piece of advice," he added, as Señor Mispall, who had just left them with an effusive bow, disappeared around the corner.

"Of course not," replied Blanchard. "What is it?"

"Don't call these people 'niggers' to their faces. They are fast learning English, and they might understand you. If you are going to be stationed in Escalante you will be entirely dependent on them for society, and if you make a break like that at the outset they won't have much use for you."

"And a lot I shall care about that," exclaimed

Blanchard, with a noisy laugh. "Do you mean to tell me that it is any pleasure to associate with these people in a social way?"

"Yes, I do," said Taylor. "And when you've lived, as I have, for six months at a stretch where you haven't a white man to talk to, you will be just as glad to associate with the natives as I have been. You may think you have resources within yourself which will be all you need, but I doubt it. And, besides, after you learn Spanish, you will find these people very pleasant companions. You may feel now that you would rather be alone than associate with a man who wears his shirt outside his trousers, or a girl who spits out of a window when she is talking to her friends in the street below. But when you've lived a month or so in Escalante, and associated with yourself till you're afraid to look in the glass, you won't be so damned exclusive, and you will go out because you're too blue to stay in. Have another bottle?"

"No, thanks; I feel as though I were all liver now. What kind of a place is that you said I am ordered to?"

"Escalante?" inquired Taylor, with a grim smile. "It's difficult to describe it. You don't know what a pleasure you have in store. When you have been

there two months, and you see a white man coming down the road, you will run up a tree and chatter—throw cocoanuts at him, most likely."

The spirits of the somewhat impressionable captain began to be affected by the banter of his companion. He had not been long enough in the service to acquire a soldierly habit of learning to make the best of monotonous situations, as soldiers are bound to do. Monotony is a far more dangerous enemy for the military man than hardship. Not infrequently the hardest battles of his life are fought out in dreary garrison existence. It is the victory gained over self in these conflicts, the habit of persistent obedience and patience here acquired, which comes to the front in the critical hour of battle and makes an old soldier reliable where a recruit is not. Blanchard knew very little about soldiering, in fact, as most of his campaigning had been done in the armory of his native town. His commission he owed to his brother-in-law, who edited the organ of the "Administration," as the "Glenville Daily Herald" pretentiously styled itself on its editorial page, and who occupied a seat in Congress.

He sat in self-absorbed silence, regarding the rows of tinned sausages and other edibles on the walls of the little shop, and wondering vaguely if the dust

on them could have gathered to such a depth in less than five years.

"Taylor," he exclaimed suddenly, "do you expect to spend the rest of your life out here?"

Taylor shrugged his broad shoulders by way of answer, and continued to draw luxuriously at his cigar.

"Because, if you do, I pity you, that's all. Why don't you get married and settle down?"

"Well," drawled the regular officer slowly, "I'll tell you one reason why I don't marry. My pay is just a hundred and twenty-five dollars a month. By being fairly economical, and keeping away from poker, I find I can get along very well on a hundred. When I meet a girl who can make me happy and run the house on the other twenty-five I will consider the matter. Hello, Fairchild!" he added, as a figure appeared in the doorway. "Is dinner ready?"

The newcomer was Dr. Richard Fairchild, a man of many experiences and a contract-surgeon in the army. He surveyed critically the array of empty bottles beside the two men before replying.

"No dinner at the house to-night," he said. "Have you fellows drank up all de la Rama's beer?"

"What do you mean?" exclaimed Taylor and

Blanchard in one breath. Fairchild was acting as caterer of the mess, and, in that capacity, was the recipient of more abuse than any other two men in the army.

"I mean, gentlemen," replied the swarthy doctor, as he seated himself on an overturned soap box and proceeded to pour the contents of a bottle of Schlitz Milwaukee into a cracked tumbler, "that we have been invited to dine with Señor Isidro Paris at his hacienda and remain afterward to a game of monte. I have accepted for you both."

"The devil you have!" said Taylor. "I wonder who you think is in command of this Post. You haven't asked my permission yet."

"I have not," replied Fairchild calmly. "You forget, Señor Teniente, that I am the post surgeon. I will put you both on sick report until to-morrow. If this beer doesn't save me the trouble," he added, opening his second bottle.

"We can't all go, very well," said Taylor. "Might have a revolution or something before we got back."

"You can turn over the reins of authority to that second lieutenant who arrived yesterday," suggested the doctor. "He'll be tickled to death."

"Where is he?" asked Taylor.

"I left him over at the quarters. He's been

around making calls on all the pretty girls in town. There is nothing slow about him; he only struck town yesterday."

"Can he speak Spanish?" inquired Blanchard.

"Like a native. He was down in Cuba for a year with a Volunteer Signal Corps or something."

"Oh, let's take the youngster with us," said Taylor. "I fancy Sergeant Everton can take care of things until morning."

"Everton, Everton," repeated Fairchild slowly. "Is that the quartermaster-sergeant?"

"Yes; and he's the best man I have in the company."

"I wonder why I haven't seen him before," said the doctor thoughtfully.

"He's been up at Gimbalaon in charge of a detachment until last week. Since then I've had him on duty as quartermaster-sergeant. I'm going to bust Burke one of these days and make Everton top."

"Is Everton his real name?" asked Blanchard.

"I think so. He's a General Order 40 man, and a college man into the bargain. I'll show you some of the maps he made of the country around Gimbalaon. He knows more engineering than I do."

"He looks like a gentleman," observed Fairchild.

"I know a man by the name of Everton in New York. I wonder if he can be any relation?"

"Very likely. He comes from there. He is a gentleman, if I am any judge of the article, and he's a medal of honor man into the bargain."

"Is he?" said Blanchard enviously. "How did he win it?"

"Saving my life under a heavy fire at Santiago," replied Taylor briefly.

"I don't wonder that you want to make him top sergeant, then," said Fairchild.

"I'd make him a brigadier-general if I had the making of them," replied the other. "Come. If we're going to the Paris hacienda we'd better be moving."

A few moments later Fairchild was dressing for the ride, when his eye happened to fall on an unopened letter lying face downward on the floor. It had apparently slipped from the bunch of American mail, which had come in the day before, and lain unnoticed all day. Stooping carelessly, he picked it up, and when his eye fell upon the handwriting he gave a start, staring for a moment at the superscription. It was addressed in a feminine hand to "Daniel Everton."

"Well, I'll be damned!" he muttered softly.

Sinking into the solitary chair which, with the folding cot and table improvised from a soap box, made up the furniture of the room, he stared intently at the letter. He remained in this attitude for several minutes, and then rising, leaned out of the window.

"Orderly," he called sharply, "tell Sergeant Everton I want to see him."

A moment later the two men faced each other in the little apartment, the sergeant standing at attention in the doorway. His face was not visible, owing to the gloom in the room, which was heightened rather than dispelled by a candle stuck in the neck of an empty beer bottle. He gave the rifle salute and stood waiting. Dr. Fairchild leaned against the improvised table with the letter in his hand and regarded the other thoughtfully. The soldierly personality had acquired a strong interest for him.

"Did you want to see me, sir?" asked the sergeant, after a moment's silence.

"Yes. Here is a letter for you. It must have gotten in with mine by mistake this morning. I only found it just now—on the floor."

"Thank you, sir," said Everton, advancing and taking the letter. "Anything else, sir?"

Fairchild regarded him attentively for a moment.

"You enlisted under an assumed name?" he asked at length.

"No, sir." The voice betrayed no emotion, but a slight touch of surprise.

"That's all, Sergeant," said the surgeon, turning briskly upon his heel and resuming his occupation of fastening his gold collar devices on to the stiff collar of his white duck blouse. Everton saluted once more and turned toward the door.

"Oh, Sergeant," added the doctor, pausing in his occupation and examining a pin prick in his finger. "Are you any relation to Marshall Everton of New York?"

"He is my father, sir."

"Indeed? I know him very well. If there is anything I can do for you at any time let me know. That's all."

"Thank you again, sir," replied the sergeant, as he once more turned to leave the room.

In the course of an hour four horsemen were riding briskly out of Silay down the highroad to the south. Taylor and Fairchild were in advance, while Captain Blanchard rode behind with the new second lieutenant. The moon was just rising, and the low marsh lands toward the sea were curtained with a heavy mist. From out this sea of liquid silver crests

of palm trees rose like fairy islands. Inland, the mountains were just visible through the haze.

The surgeon rode by Taylor's side, and for a while neither spoke. Each was impressed with the beauty of the scene, and each was engrossed with thoughts of a personal nature. The two men had been friends for years, and their friendship had been cemented by mutual association in war; but the thoughts which are prone to possess the mind on a brilliant moonlight night each kept to himself.

At length, when they had ridden for a mile without speaking, Dr. Fairchild broke the silence.

"Funny how small the world is," he said.

"Apropos of what?" said Taylor.

"You know my sister?"

"Yes," replied Taylor simply, leaning over and doing something to his stirrup leather that it did not require. "What about her?" he asked, after waiting a moment for the other to continue.

"Well, I happened to get hold of a letter to one of your men this afternoon—in with my mail by mistake. It was from her. Queer, that's all. I wonder what the man is doing here—in the ranks?"

"Is it Everton?"

"Yes. How did you know that?"

"Guessed it, easily enough. There's only one man in the company it could be."

"A case of patriotic enthusiasm, I suppose," continued Fairchild. "It seems odd, though, our running across him out here."

This observation called for no reply, and Taylor made none. They galloped on, letting the horses have their heads until a small river was reached. Here they drew up, and before starting to ford the stream allowed the panting animals to slake their thirst in the cool water. Taylor looked thoughtfully at the reflection of the bamboo brake in the smooth surface until the horses had drank their fill, and then, as they were slowly wading across, he asked:

"How is your sister?"

"Quite well, thanks, the last time I heard," replied Fairchild conventionally.

The conversation drifted into other channels during the remainder of the ride. A few moments later Blanchard and the second lieutenant came galloping up, and the four men turned down the broad driveway which leads to the hacienda mansion of Isidro Paris.

Chapter III

JOSÉ MISPALL PLAYS MONTE

SUPPOSE they won. What sort of a government would we have with men like Montilla at the head of it? Bah!"

Señor Isidro emphasized this inquiry by a sweeping gesture with the hand which held his knife, and Taylor, who sat next to him, flinched nervously as the hand passed him and returned to the table with a thud. Señor Isidro was a large man, and, notwithstanding his origin, which was largely Spanish, he was of a darker skin than José Mispall, who sat a little way down the long table gorging himself with food and drinking a great deal more than was good for him. In fact, he was browner than most natives, because he had spent his life under the rays of that tropical sun, which can turn a white man as brown as any Malay. His hair was of a steel gray, and his eyes were the kind that can flash fire when aroused or look with sympathy upon the needs of a friend. His manner was usually quiet and dignified, but he

could be excited too, on occasions, and few things irritated him so much as a reference to the present war.

"I tell you," he continued, after a pause, "whatever the government which the United States will give us may be, it will be one under which we can live and work our haciendas and be safe in our beds. That's the chief point."

"But is it true," asked Mispall thickly, "that the people in the United States consider us unfit for self-government?"

"We are unfit," replied Paris, "taking all classes into consideration. In America all men vote; rich and poor alike. There the poor are educated men, here they are no better than beasts. Is it not so, Señor Teniente?"

Thus appealed to, Taylor replied tactfully: "In no country, Señor, are all the people fit for the franchise they use. In the United States we have thousands who vote without knowing exactly what they are voting for. Now, gentlemen like yourself and Señor Mispall are as well qualified to vote as any one."

"Ah, but your proportion must tell in that case," replied the old man shrewdly. "Here you may find a few thousand hacenderos, merchants, and others who are intelligent enough to vote; but the masses—

the common people." He did not finish the sentence, shrugging his shoulders expressively.

"I think the poorer classes are pretty fairly intelligent," protested Dr. Fairchild. "At least in the towns."

"In the towns, yes," responded Paris; "but the people who work on the haciendas—the taos—they are little better than animals. There is one thing to be said, however," he added; "they are such beasts they wouldn't take the trouble to vote."

"Until some politician like our friend Montilla showed them how to convert a vote in two dollars, Mex.," suggested Taylor, lighting his cigarette and tossing the match-box across the table to the second lieutenant.

"It isn't a question of the franchise or its abuse," continued Paris. "I presume no country has absolutely pure elections. But if these people had their way and their precious independence, we'd all have our throats cut. We lack capable, experienced men for the high places as badly as we do intelligent voters to place them there. We need a mother country, and shall for a generation to come."

Mispall's small eyes gleamed viciously. "If that is what you call Spain, give me no more of it," he said.

"Spain was no mother. She was a bad step-

mother," replied Paris. "Thank God, her rule is over."

"Amen," said Mispall, crossing himself reverently, for he was religious in his own superstitious way.

"What sort of a sugar season do you expect, Señor?" asked Taylor, wishing to turn the conversation from politics into less dangerous channels.

"Very good, I trust. Why?" responded Paris.

"If the Holy Mother sees fit to keep the locusts from our land," added Mispall, crossing himself again.

"What do you mean by that?" asked the second lieutenant.

"He refers to the pest of our beautiful island," explained Paris. "The locusts. They come over from Guimaras and Panay, and in a single night destroy a sugar crop worth thousands of dollars."

"Do you mean the kind of locusts John the Baptist ate—grasshoppers?"

"I believe they are the same," answered Isidro. "I should not care to eat them," he added with a grimace.

"Do you believe that story?" asked the second lieutenant, speaking in a low tone, in English, to Fairchild.

"What story?" asked the doctor, who had not been listening.

"Why, he says that flocks, or herds, or whatever you call 'em, of locusts come over from Panay and Guimaras and eat up their sugar crops over night."

"Yes, it's true. I've seen them."

"How the devil do they get here—fly?"

"Certainly."

"But it's twenty miles. Do you mean to tell me that grasshoppers can fly twenty miles without lighting?"

"That's what I said."

"It isn't possible," said the second lieutenant positively.

"All right," rejoined the doctor laconically.

He was some ten years older than the second lieutenant, and in those ten years he had learned never to call anything impossible unless he had proven it so.

"You have suffered from the attacks of the locusts?" he said, turning to Mispall.

"Yes, indeed," replied the native. "For two years now they have ruined my crop. In many ways I have been unlucky. Fortune has not smiled."

"You tempt her too much, José," said Paris, with his mouth full of chicken. "You play too high. I hope you will be prudent to-night."

Mispall shrugged his shoulders with a fine assumption of indifference. "What matters it, as long as one loses to one's friends?" he replied.

Señor Isidro laughed noisily. "That's a brave sentiment, and as long as you feel that way you will find plenty of friends who will be willing to win your money. Let us hope that you will retrieve your recent bad fortune at the table this evening."

Mispall did not reply, being engaged in tossing off a glass of whisky. He was beginning the evening badly by drinking too much, and already his hand trembled visibly. Of late his luck had been so bad that it had practically completed the ruin in his fortunes begun ten years before by idleness and dissipation. Señor José was one of those men to whom an inheritance is little short of a curse, and when his father died, leaving him quite a considerable fortune, he had set to work to get rid of it. It had taken ten years to complete the work, but it was now so nearly completed that he had ridden over to the Paris hacienda on this occasion with five thousand dollars of borrowed money, with which he hoped to win enough to set him on his feet again. An old woman servant in his family had prophesied that he would win tonight, and, being of a superstitious turn of mind, he

placed great confidence in her prophecy, and was impatient for the game to commence.

A short silence fell upon those at table after Paris's last remark, a silence which was broken only by the noisy mastication of an old man, a distant connection of the family and a pensioner upon Señor Isidro's bounty, who rinsed out his mouth with water, which he expectorated onto the floor.

"I wonder what he'll do next?" said the second lieutenant nervously, speaking in an undertone to Fairchild.

"That's about the limit, I fancy. He'll go to sleep before long."

Having satisfied his appetite, the young officer leaned back in his chair and looked about him. He had not yet fully recovered from the astonishment which had been his upon his introduction to this remarkable household. He was having his first experience of Philippine hospitality, and the whole establishment was a revelation to him.

His ideas concerning the natives of the big archipelago had been, up to the time when he reported in Manila a week before, derived exclusively from American newspapers. Those which had made the most impression on him were illustrated weeklies showing family groups of half naked savages stand-

ing about with bows and arrows and labeled, "Our enemies in the Philippines."

The room in which he now found himself was at least fifty feet in length and opened upon a big veranda running around the house. It was lavishly furnished, and the floors were of some dark, highly polished hard wood. A half dozen muchachos served them, and pressed upon those present many and various beverages. Paris himself drank but little, knowing too well the climate of his native land to mix champagne, beer, and whisky as the second lieutenant was doing.

Of the others at the table, there were, besides Señora Paris, two women, the one her sister and the other her niece. The former had recently presented her spouse with a son and heir, whom she brought to dinner with her. The head of the household ignored their presence during the meal, and when, on two occasions, the second lieutenant attempted to engage the younger woman in conversation, his efforts met with slight success. Blanchard studied them curiously, being unable to join in the conversation, and consequently finding the dinner monotonous.

The four Americans had not arrived until after nine o'clock, and by the time the meal was over it was eleven. As soon as they had finished, the women

withdrew to their own apartments and the men sought the next room, where the table had been arranged. The other guests of the evening now began to arrive. There were about twenty of them, the owners of neighboring haciendas and young men of sporting proclivities from Silay and Talisay. They smoked excessively, and talked excitedly among themselves of their recent losses or successes at cards, of the prospects for the season's sugar crop, and of many other themes of local interest.

The game began almost immediately by request of Mispall, who was impatient to realize on the prophecy of his old servant, and a silence fell upon those in the room as Paris went to the bank and the young caballeros began to bet.

It was extremely hot, and the air was laden with tobacco smoke. Outside the moon was high in the heavens, and the soft air of the April evening, fresh with the earthly freshness of the early morning hours, came into the overheated room from the broad verandas. Invited by the cool air without, Taylor and the Volunteer Captain left a group of natives who were hanging over the table and withdrew to the veranda. They threw themselves into the long cane chairs which they found there, and were for a few moments absorbed in admiration of the beauty

of the night. After the overheated house they had left, the cool air was grateful to their flushed faces.

"Well, I must confess that this is an unique household," said Blanchard. "I never expected to find anything like this out here."

"Are you enjoying yourself?" asked Taylor, drawing contentedly at his cigar and watching the smoke drift over the railing and disappear in the moonlight.

"Yes; but I suppose I would have more fun out of it if I spoke the language."

"That will come in time. What do you think of our friend Paris?"

"He seems to be a remarkable man, in his way. Is he really friendly to us—really loyal to the United States?"

"Yes, entirely so, I fancy," replied Taylor, with a yawn. "For some time he may have been on the fence, but now that he knows that we are here to stay, he wants this revolutionary spirit to quiet down, so he can work his haciendas. What he wants is a staple government. He belongs to the class who have lost money by this war. Still, I have no doubt he occasionally contributes to the other side, even now."

"What makes you think that?"

"I judge it from the fact that he is never disturbed by our friends out in the hills there." Taylor waved his cigar toward the dim outline of the mountains. "I have never heard of their troubling him."

"Do you mean the insurgents?"

"That's what they call themselves. In reality they are nothing but a lot of bandits. This revolution is kept up by the class whom we may term rich malcontents. By that I mean some of the wealthy hacenderos, who are naturally gamblers and idlers."

"If they are gamblers and idlers," interrupted the captain, "how did they acquire all this wealth?"

"Did you never hear," asked Taylor dryly, "of a gambler and idler inheriting money from a sober and industrious parent? Well, I presume that is where men like Mispall in there get theirs. I don't imagine that José ever did a stroke of work in his life. When you have a couple of sons of your own, some day, to blow in more money in a night than you make in a month, you will understand about the Great Creator's system of keeping things even in this world. I know one young man on this island who came in last month with a party of ladrones and burned up his own father's hacienda, just because the old man got tired of paying his debts. It's men like that, aided and abetted by fellows like our friend

Mispall, who cause all the trouble. They are not patriots in any sense of the word. Some of them live in the coast towns, under the very noses of the Americans, and hold commissions in the insurgent army."

"Does Paris, himself, mix in politics?"

"Not so much now as formerly. He was at one time governor of the island. At present he devotes his time to making more money."

"I don't blame him. Is he very rich?"

"Yes, I believe so. Millions, probably. He told me once that he made seventy thousand a year on this hacienda alone. He owns several others in the south and a lot of houses in the different towns near here. He rents these at fabulous prices to us now. We pay four hundred a month for that house in Silay, where our quarters are. He never got more than fifty for it in the old Spanish days."

Blanchard was not surprised. He was now prepared to believe any tale, however extraordinary, of the wealth of his host. He was of a nature to be impressed by externals, and already began to regard Paris with a respect which he had never imagined he could have for a "nigger." He smoked thoughtfully and looked out over the acres of cane fields which lay before them.

"Is the fighting all over out here?" he asked, after a long pause.

"Pretty nearly. We may have a skirmish or so from time to time."

The Volunteer was disgusted. "I came out here to fight," he said. "If the war is over, I might as well resign and go into the sugar business. I wonder if old Paris wants a partner?"

"I don't know, I'm sure; you might ask him. Are you tired of soldiering—already?"

"I don't call this soldiering. This is going out into society."

Taylor laughed. "You'll have all the soldiering you want when you get to Escalante," he replied.

"Do you mean that there's a chance of scrap up there?"

"No, not fighting, necessarily; but plenty of scouting around the country."

Blanchard was about to ask another question when a figure darkened the open doorway of the veranda, and, looking up, Taylor observed the second lieutenant.

"Hello, youngster," he called. "Having a good time?"

"Oh, there you are! What are you fellows doing out here?"

"Enjoying life in our own quiet way," replied the other, looking at his watch. It was after midnight, and he was tired, having been up since dawn of the previous day. "I think we had better be going."

"I tell you," said the second lieutenant, excitedly, advancing to where the two men were sitting, "there's a big game on in there, and our friend Mispall is getting it in the neck—losing five hundred and a thousand at a clip. He's made Paris play with him, and all the others have dropped out. You had better come in and see the fun."

"By George!" exclaimed Taylor, rising to his feet. "It will be one of their big games. The play doesn't often run as high as that. It will continue until somebody is ruined, and it won't be old Paris, I fancy. I'm sorry for that poor devil Mispall."

When the three men entered the room where the game was in progress, they at once noticed the air of suppressed excitement which prevailed. At the end of the table sat Señor Paris, who was receiving the bets of Mispall. The elder man's composure and gravity were in strong contrast to the almost frenzied excitement of his young neighbor. Señor José, discarding all attempts to play with any caution, leaned over the table and placed his bets wildly. He was already a ruined man, and the quality of honesty

was not sufficiently developed in his character to prevent his playing after he knew he could not hope to make good his losses. Indeed, he bet with even greater freedom and extravagance now that he was wagering the credit of a hopeless bankrupt against the good money of his host. Fortune had been against him from the first, but he had continued to play, hoping that a lucky stroke might put him on his feet again. In the short time the Americans had been out of the room he had lost over six thousand dollars, and, altho several of his more intimate friends remonstrated with him, it was without avail.

The play continued for some time after Taylor and the captain entered the room, Paris reserving the same calm and imperturbable exterior. His excitement, if he had any, was only shown by his puffing on the long, black cheroot which was held tightly between his lips. Like all of his race, he was often excitable when there was no occasion for it, but when it was a question of money he dropped the affable, social man and took on the cool and calculating man of business. High play was by no means a novel form of amusement with him; tho, to do him justice, had he known that Mispall was ruining himself, he would have stopped the game long since and

closed the bank. He had, indeed, made one or two suggestions to this effect, but they had met with impassioned remonstrance.

Mispall's brother now approached him and laid a restraining hand on his sleeve.

"Don't tempt fortune any more to-night, José," he said. "The luck is strong against you."

Mispall brushed him fiercely to one side. The state of semi-intoxication in which he left the dinner table had been increased by his drinking freely through the game, and even now he stopped long enough to go to the refreshment table and toss off a glass of whisky.

"Caramba!" he replied hoarsely. "Do you think I can stop now? The luck must turn."

"Very well; but one word more," added his brother in a low tone, as José again started for the table. "Play low until the luck does turn, and then bet high if you want to win."

Acting upon this suggestion, José returned to the table and very cautiously placed a hundred dollars on the king to lose. Paris dealt swiftly, and after several cards had come up, the king made his appearance in the losing pile.

"Bueno!" exclaimed his brother. "Now place two bets."

"Mind your own business!" growled José, ungratefully. "I can attend to mine."

At this the brother shrugged his shoulders expressively and withdrew to the other side of the table.

Again José bet, this time placing two hundred dollars each on the ace and nine spot, playing the former to win and the latter to lose. Paris dealt, and the two cards were the first to come up. Mispall had won four hundred dollars.

"You see," he shouted, addressing his brother, "the luck has turned. What did I tell you?"

"Go slow, then, and don't abuse it," returned the other curtly.

There are times when good advice is the worst advice to give. It excites antagonism and makes the one advised take the wrong road when he might have taken the right one, if left to himself. Such was the case in this instance. José was in that stage of drunkenness when he placed a higher valuation on his own judgment than on that of any one else.

"You are a fool!" he retorted angrily. "When I was losing I bet high, and now that I win, you would have me play low."

He then turned to the table, and very deliberately placed one thousand dollars each on the center of four cards. At this tremendous bet there was a silence

in the room for an instant, for even the more reckless of the gamblers present were startled at its magnitude. Then every one began to talk at once, and the room was in an uproar.

"Bravo, José!" shouted one of the younger hotheads, slapping Mispall on the back approvingly. "You show the proper spirit."

The older and more conservative men were aghast. "Don't accept such a bet," said one of them to Paris. "It will ruin him if he loses."

The words reached Mispall as he stood at the other side of the table, his arms folded and his manner sending forth a challenge to the world in general and the bank in particular.

"Do you refuse my bet?" he demanded in a high voice, which silenced all the others in the room.

Paris shuffled the cards slowly and smoked thoughtfully. In the years that were gone he had known Mispall's father intimately, and this fact had given him a more than neighborly interest in the son. He hesitated.

"I do not refuse your bet," he said at length, "but I advise you not to make it."

"You are not the one to give such advice, Señor," replied Mispall, with an insulting sneer. "You have won six thousand dollars."

"Then why make it four more?" remonstrated Paris. "I may win all four bets."

"And I may win all four. Do you refuse me the opportunity?"

"I have refused you nothing, José," said the old man in a conciliatory tone.

"Will you deal?" demanded Mispall roughly.

Paris rose to his feet, and drawing up his bent frame to its full height, looked at the other quietly in the eye.

"At my convenience, Señor," he said with dignity.

"Let some one else shuffle the pack," exclaimed Ricardo Mispall.

"I'll shuffle them," said the second lieutenant, who stood next to Paris, holding out his hand.

Dr. Fairchild placed a restraining grasp upon the young man's arm. "Better keep out of this," he said curtly in English. "Whoever loses won't thank you."

The young officer dropped his hand, and a hacendero who stood on Señor Isidro's left took the pack and shuffled it. A tense silence fell upon the occupants of the room as Paris once more received the cards and began to deal.

And then followed such a run of luck as many gamblers go through their lives without witnessing.

The first four cards to pass into the losing pile were those which Mispall had backed to win. His losses for the evening now amounted to ten thousand dollars. As one card after another was turned up, and he saw his money slipping away, a thousand at a time, his face grew purple and his breath came in quick gasps.

Fairchild was the only one of those about the table who was not too engrossed by the fascination of the deal to notice him. The doctor glanced down the table to where Mispall was standing, and when he saw the dull pallor which had replaced the flush on the native's face he passed quickly around, reaching him just as the last card of the four was dealt to lose. Señor José's legs began to tremble, and an instant later gave way entirely. Fairchild caught him as he fell, and then, with the assistance of the second lieutenant, carried the unconscious man out of the room and laid him upon the floor of the veranda.

An hour or so later, the four officers bade Mispall "good-night" at the door of his house and rode on to their own quarters. The native had quickly recovered from the faint into which he had fallen at the Paris hacienda, but was still heavily under the influence of drink.

Left to himself, he shivered in the chill air as he gave his horse to a sleepy muchacho, and entering his house, slowly ascended the stairs. As he reached the top step his foot came in contact with something soft. It was Benita Llopis, who was sleeping at the head of the stairs. It was she who had made the prophecy that this was to be his lucky night at cards.

Ever since he had regained consciousness, José had been controlling, by a strong effort, his naturally violent and brutal temper. Freed now from the restraint placed upon him by the presence of the others, he gave way to an impulse sent by his evil genius and kicked the old woman viciously in the side. She gave a sharp cry, and rolled quickly out of the way as her master staggered across the hallway to his own room. This he entered after fumbling for a moment with the door handle, and throwing himself upon the bed fell into a drunken stupor.

Chapter IV

TWO PATRIOTS PLAN A CAMPAIGN

IT was after nine o'clock when Mispall opened his bloodshot eyes and stared stupidly at the canopy of his four-poster bed. For several minutes he was unable to recall distinctly the events of the preceding evening, but lay upon his back, the bullet-shaped head turned toward the window, the face looking haggard and drawn in the dim light. The meager rays which had succeeded in penetrating the opaque, sea-shell window-panes gave no suggestion of the fierce sunlight without. It does not take many hours for the sun of the equator to rob the earth of all morning freshness, and by nine o'clock the day was heavy with the still, quiet heat of a northern noontide. A faint breeze was, indeed, blowing fitfully from the sea, but no part of it entered the gloomy apartment, in which the air was foul and oppressive.

The room was almost bare of furniture. The dirty blotches on the walls showed where the rains

of more than one wet season had entered, and the whole house was suggestive of neglect and decay. The long mirror set into the wall, to reflect, perhaps, the beauties of some vain little señorita of bygone days, was now disfigured by a large crack extending across its face. The carved wooden cupid, which had once occupied a conspicuous position on its top, was now enjoying an armless repose, covered with dust and cobwebs, in one corner of the room. Upon the cane bottom of the bed was a straw matting, crumpled and badly soiled. No other bedding was needed by the man who lay there, fully dressed, and on whose face the perspiration stood out in large beads.

As he slowly recovered the use of his faculties, there came to Señor José a physical and mental pang simultaneously. This is not an unusual combination of visitors with a man who has spent the night in dissipation. Together with the recollection of his losses at cards the evening before, he felt a sharp pain, which seemed to split his head with its violence. He groaned aloud, and presently nature's demand for purer air overcame his lethargy. Staggering to his feet, he crossed unsteadily to the large window, and, pushing it wide open, leaned across the sill, blinded by the dazzling light which flooded the room.

Outside, the town was still with the stillness of intense heat; a silence which surpassed that of midnight. The commercial activity which comes with dawn in the tropics had subsided, and even the dogs were quiet. As his eyes became more accustomed to the light, and the fierce pain in his head settled into a dull ache, he glanced vacantly about him.

Mispall's house was located upon a long and dusty highway near the outskirts of the town. A few other dwellings of nipa lined the road on either side, and then came the open country, the rich hacienda lands, and, far beyond, the blue mountains. A herd of swine—those scavengers of the town—grunted contentedly beneath a shack across the dusty street, in the middle of which lay a naked little brown boy of three years, playing with a big game chicken. The bird, seemingly perplexed by the silence which reigned, or perhaps anxious to recall to the memory of the dwellers in the street his victory in the cockpit the preceding Sunday, flapped his wings and gave utterance to his high spirits in a shrill crow.

His attention drawn by the sound, Mispall glanced up the road. His eye traveled past the child and its pet and rested upon the figure of a horseman some distance away, who was riding into the town from

the direction of one of the mountain villages. He was still too far off to be recognized, but Mispall continued to watch him idly, as his thoughts reverted to his trouble.

He had just begun to recognize the disagreeable fact that he could not hope to keep off any longer the final hour of settlement. His creditors had been exceedingly pressing of late, and he owed many gambling debts, beside a host of others more legitimately contracted. A man may run through a fortune without feeling any very severe pang until he reaches the end, but the hour comes at length when the last dollar is gone; when the daily necessary expenditures have only an empty pocket to be met from, and he then realizes what the word "ruin" means. That moment, with its attendant horrors, had now come to Mispall, and the temptation to crime, which comes with it to weak natures, was rapidly drawing near. It was coming in the person of the solitary horseman approaching from the mountains and urging his jaded horse forward through a cloud of dust.

"What shall I do?" Mispall muttered to himself, pressing a hot hand against his aching head. As tho in answer to the query, the horseman drew near and, looking up, recognized Mispall.

"Buenas dias, José," he called gaily, waving his hand. "May one enter?"

"Come up," replied Mispall, returning the salutation as he recognized the other to be one Bernardino Rigon, chief of a small band of insurgents who were entrenched in the jungle some twenty miles inland from Silay. As Mizpall recognized him, there came to him a possible solution of his difficulty—a solution in itself hazardous, but desperate men are ever ready to try desperate remedies; a solution that was criminal, but men who lead idle and dissolute lives are apt to find it a short path which leads from idleness to crime, and one down which, when driven by poverty, it is only too easy to turn. More idle men might take this path than do were their need as pressing as Mispall's.

El Capitan Rigon was a dual character and enjoyed the part hugely. His nature was essentially dramatic in its tendencies, and the double rôle of hacendero and insurgent was one that delighted him. His ears were not as accustomed to the hum of bullets as were his shoulders to the gorgeous pair of gold shoulder straps which formed a conspicuous part of his showy uniform. He was a rake of an agreeable sort, who liked to play at war provided he had some secure place from which to direct the movement of

his force and two or three underlings to write for him the stilted letters which he was in the habit of sending to the other insurgent officers in Negros and Panay.

On the present occasion he was attired in a suit of white linen; looking, despite his early morning ride, very fresh and clean. As he dismounted and gave his horse to one of Mispall's servants, he hummed gaily an air from one of the comic operas in which, as the best singer in the town, he had once taken a leading rôle. As he advanced and ascended the stairway he twirled with one hand a meager, black mustache, the pride and at the same time the disappointment of his life. His two great ambitions were to be a general and to own a pair of mustaches such as he had once seen in a picture of the King of Italy. In both of which he was destined to disappointment.

He extended his hand to José, who had come to the head of the stairs to meet him, and they exchanged an effusive greeting.

"I am glad to see you," said Mispall.

"Your pleasure is reciprocated, my friend," replied the debonair captain, flecking the dust from his boots with his riding-whip. "Have you breakfasted?"

"Not yet. You will join me?"

"With pleasure. You are late this morning."

"Say late last night, rather."

"You were at the house of Isidro Paris?"

"Yes. How did you know?"

"News travels fast sometimes. I am sorry."

"You are unusually sympathetic," said Mispall with a slight sneer, as they took their seats. He poured out a cup of chocolate and waved his hand toward the pot, inviting Rigon to help himself. Old Benita, who was still reminded of Mispall's brutality by a sharp pain in her side, having brought in the breakfast tray, withdrew to the other side of the room and began to wipe off a chair with a dirty rag.

"You over-estimate my concern for your welfare," replied Rigon coolly, pouring out his chocolate and eating a rice cake with relish, for his ride had made him hungry. "I am sorry you lost, for your own sake, but I think of myself first from force of habit. I want some of the money you owe me."

"Well, you know I haven't it. I will repay you when I can."

"You owe others, too; will you pay me first?"

"Certainly. Can you doubt it?"

"One finds it easy to doubt."

Mispall's small eyes glittered with an unfriendly

light, and he started to make a retort, but controlled the impulse. He had good reason for not wishing to quarrel with the man to whom he looked for aid in a desperate enterprise. He leaned across the board, smearing his elbow in the can of obnoxious butter, and whispered insinuatingly:

"If I thought I could trust you——"

Rigon put down his cup and returned the other's glance.

"What do you mean? Get farther away; your breath is offensive."

Mispall leaned back in his chair and folded his arms.

"I mean," he continued, "that there is a way by which I can get the money, and more, too—a way to make us both rich—if you will aid me."

As Rigon did not reply immediately, Mispall continued: "What, think you, should be the fate of a man who, while our countryman, is our country's enemy? Who is a traitor, and wants the Americanos to govern—thinking us unfit to govern ourselves? Voicing this treachery before a lot of American officers. What should be the fate of such a man?"

"Death!" said Rigon, as dramatically as was possible with his mouth full of rice cake.

"Ah, yes; you say truly." Mispall, leaning forward once more, continued: "He should be killed; his life is a sacrifice, he being an enemy, and worse than that—a traitor. Now, how about his money?"

"Who is he, and how much has he?" asked Rigon, coming to the point at once, now that money was mentioned.

Mispall did not heed the interruption. "What does our country need so much as money," he pursued; "money with which to buy arms and cartridges and"—he added diplomatically—"with which to pay the salaries of her officers?"

Rigon was not slow to see the drift of the other's argument. "What is it that you propose?" he asked, taking another rice cake. He had seen enough of soldiering to show him that a breakfast was not a thing to be despised, even in the weightiest of councils.

"I wonder," continued Mispall, musingly, looking at the other as though to read his character and gage the depth of his patriotism; "I wonder whether you are one to look upon a matter broadly—whether you could be made to see that the end justifies the means?"

Rigon stopped eating and looked the other steadily

in the eye. "I will consider any proposition which means money," he said at length.

"Good! Then listen." Mispall leaned across the table and lowered his voice. As he opened his lips to speak, he noticed for the first time that Benita had not left the room. "I can't talk here," he said, rising, and indicating her with a jerk of his head. "Come into my room."

Rigon gulped down what remained of the chocolate, and then followed Mispall into the room in which the latter had passed the night.

José closed the door and locked it on the inside. When he had done so, Benita crossed the hall silently and applied her ear to the keyhole. For a long time she crouched there, and then, rising, hurried to the head of the stairway. Here she paused for a moment, as though uncertain whether to go or stay. At this moment the door of the bedroom was opened and the head of her master thrust forth.

"What are you doing there, you old devil?" he demanded roughly.

She hesitated no longer, but left the house and crossed the Plaza to the building in which the American garrison was quartered.

Chapter V

ONE CASUALTY

ON the afternoon of the day following Mispall's conference with Rigon the rainy season descended upon the island, and in the course of a few hours the dry, dusty roads became sodden with a heavy, black mud. The travelers who ventured forth found them well-nigh impassable owing to this mud, which clung in great clods to their horses' hoofs and made each step a labored effort. Across the Straits the wind drove the rain in blinding gusts, and at noon the day was as dark as the twilight of the dry months. At rare intervals there would come a break in the heavy clouds, and then the sun would shine fiercely through, drawing the moisture from earth and foliage in a heavy steam.

The streets of the villages were by no means deserted because of the downpour. The huge bath supplied by nature was taken advantage of by scores of sturdily-built children, who ran naked about the streets, reveling in the cool shower which fell upon

their black heads and ran in rivulets down their little bronze bodies.

The days, dark and gloomy, were fit precursors of the black, tempestuous nights. The entire absence of street lights and the thick window-panes in the better class of houses made the towns almost as dark as the country.

At about eleven o'clock on the night following the events recorded in the last chapter, Lieutenant Taylor marched stealthily out of Silay at the head of a detachment of twenty-two men, and took the road to the Paris hacienda.

The night was so dark that the men, who plodded patiently along in single file, could not see five feet in advance. The road was long and heavy, and the errand did not promise to be very successful. Most of the men had been on more than one similar expedition, and, while they did not know their objective point, they were prepared for an all-night march in the rain, no fight, and no breakfast.

They did not grumble, however. Occasionally one of them would miss his footing and fall headlong in the soft mud; a low curse would be heard, followed by a laugh at the man's expense from his comrades—a laugh in which he joined, usually, as he picked himself up and struggled bravely onward.

When they were within half a mile of their destination Taylor gave the command to halt for a brief rest. The road which had seemed so short when ridden over in the moonlight two nights before had seemed interminable now. The men threw themselves upon the ground, for their clothes were so wet that they would have sat cheerfully upon the bed of a stream. In the darkness it was impossible for them to distinguish each other's features. The four or five who formed the rear-guard huddled together beneath the scant shelter afforded by a dwarf palm and conversed cheerfully in a low tone.

"Is Sergeant Cassidy there?" inquired a voice from the darkness.

"I am that. Did yez iver know me to absint meself from th' post av juty?"

"Gi' me a chew tobacco."

Cassidy thrust his wet hand into his wet pocket and drew forth a wet and moldy plug of tobacco. With the trusting guilelessness of a recruit he held it forth into the darkness. It was seized upon, and before it was restored to its owner's pocket had passed around the circle. The entire rear-guard was provided for. They chewed silently, and expectorated freely upon each other's leggins and shoes in the darkness.

"In all me milit'ry expeerience," said Cassidy, as he wofully felt of what remained of his plug, "I niver knew annything so damn mean. Why can't you fellows bring your own tobacco—do yez expect me t' supply th' hull outfit?"

"Never mind, Sergeant; we'll be back in Silay in the morning."

"Will we, indeed, now? An', do ye know, some av us may be in kingdom come by th' mornin'. An' if we're not, maybe we won't be in Silay, annyway. Take my advice, and never lave quarters ag'in without a plug av tobacco. Devil a bit will I lend in the future."

"Oh, me! I vish I vas dead!" exclaimed a voice.

"Who iver it is that sed that, I cuncur in th' sintiment," rejoined Cassidy. "Who is it?"

"Me!" It was Redder who spoke, and he was the most pessimistic man in the Silay detachment.

"What's th' matter wid you now?"

"I'm dired of all dis hikin' aboud de coundry in the nighd and back again nexd mornin'. I vish I vas home!"

"Where is your home—on the Bowery?"

A low chuckle ran around the circle at this feeble sally. The greater the discomfort, the easier these

men found it to laugh at such humor as was forthcoming. The man from the mountains of Tennessee next spoke up. "Do you gentlemen wanta know wheah weah bound foh?" he asked.

"Such curiosity on th' part av an enlisted man is conduct t' th' prejudis' av good order an' milit'ry discipline," replied Cassidy, wiping the water from his face and trying to cover the chamber of his rifle with one corner of his rubber poncho. "Do you mean to say the lootenant has took you into his confidence?"

"I don't see why they should have all this secrecy about it," exclaimed the Third Avenue recruit, fretfully. He was just learning the hard side of war—the side which does more to make character than battles.

"You don't, eh?" said the Irishman. "Well, I'll tell you. If they told you, you'd tell th' lovely young female gurl I seen you talkin' wid this mornin', an' she'd tell th' hull town; so that, when we got there—wherever it is—there'd be no naygurs to fight."

"Dere von't be none, anyhow," said Redder. "Dere neber is none."

"Shut up, Redder," replied Cassidy. "For an old soldier, you make me tired. Do you want to discourage us?"

Sergeants Cassidy and Redder were inseparable, and were always at odds—conversationally. They often shared the same blanket when on field service, but never the same views or opinions in camp or quarters. They had begun by enlisting together some twelve years before, and had served together ever since. They generally received their discharges on the same day, made sundry remarks to the derogation of the army as a profession, and declared their intention of leaving it for good. At the end of three months they would be back in a recruiting office, anxious to be sent to "the old regiment." Side by side they had gone through an Indian campaign, the Spanish war, and the Philippine unpleasantness.

"Ah know wheah weah goin'," continued the man from the mountains of Tennessee. "Weah just goin' out to ole Paris's place. Ah heard th' ole woman that's washin' fer the officers tell Everton abaout it."

"Everton's a gentleman soldier," said the recruit sneeringly.

"An' what if he is," demanded Cassidy angrily. "He's more av a soldier in wan minit than you'll be in your whole life, you dirty rookie, you."

The recruit made no reply, but sat shivering and nursing his resentment. He had prepared himself for the night's work with whisky, and was therefore

used up long before the work began. His devotion to the cigarette—a delicacy which could not be enjoyed in his present circumstances—forbade him the solace of chewing tobacco; to which, in its proper time and place, there is no equal.

The rain had held up for a few moments and now began again. As the first heavy drops fell upon the hand of the man from Tennessee he asked in an aggrieved tone, "Is it rainin' again?"

"Such a proseedure on th' part av nature," said Cassidy, who was addicted to a somewhat stilted style of speech, "would not in th' least surprise me."

"Id's always rainin', Cassidy, an' you know id," said Redder.

"You make me tired!" responded his comrade. "You found it too cold in Alaska, an' now you find it too hot in th' Philippeenes. Damn me if I don't think you're onraysonible."

"Oh, the Irish an' th' Dutch,
They don't amount to much!"

It was a little Yankee from somewhere in the hills of Vermont who recited these lines in a sing-song voice. It had a dampening effect on the conversation, and before it could be resumed Taylor's voice

rang out sharply in the command to move forward. The men struggled wearily to their feet, fell in, and resumed the march. The little column moved on silently and turned up the driveway leading to the hacienda. When they were within a few hundred yards of the house Taylor stumbled over a dog, which was sleeping in the middle of the road. The cur set up a mournful howl, which was taken up directly by a score of others. In a moment the whole canine population of the neighborhood was yelping excitedly.

"Do you think they will hear that?" asked Taylor, speaking in a low tone to Everton, who was marching by his side.

"I don't think so, sir. They probably won't get down here before half-past one or two. If they did hear it, they wouldn't necessarily suspect anything. These dogs bark at everything." A few minutes later they arrived at the house, and Taylor, halting the detachment, made a hurried survey of the field.

Two roads led in to the hacienda from up country. The one to the north was the one which, in Taylor's estimation, the attacking party would be the more apt to take. Giving the order to fall in in double ranks, he divided his force into two parties of eleven men each, and taking one of these placed it in am-

bush, behind a low wall, on this road. From their position they commanded a good sweep of the approach for about fifty yards. Everton took the other half of the detachment and placed them in a similar ambuscade on the other road. In five minutes from the time they reached the house the whole force was disposed of and lay waiting.

The hours dragged slowly on, and there was no sign of the enemy. The rain continued to fall in torrents, drenching the men, who lay motionless, their bodies partly under water in the ditch. From under their rubber ponchos the barrels of their Krag-Jorgensens were leveled down the road. The strictest silence was, of course, enjoined, and the only relaxation to be had was the chewing of tobacco.

Sergeants Everton and Cassidy lay side by side, their shoulders touching, and the rain running from the brim of the Irishman's hat onto the shoulder of his comrade. Both strained their eyes into the darkness until they ached, without seeing anything.

At last, when the night was far advanced, and they had about given up hope of having even a shot at the enemy, Cassidy leaned over and, placing his lips close to Everton's ear, whispered: "The'r' coomin'!"

"How do you know?" The question was put in a faint whisper, just loud enough to be audible.

"I seen wan av th' butees light a cigareet. They've halted about three hundred yards down th' road beyandt. Ther'll be a man up directly to ray-connoiter."

"Pass the word to lay low and keep quiet."

"I will," murmured Cassidy. "An' a foine state av affairs in th' rigler army when such a caution is necessary!" he muttered under his breath.

It was now nearly three o'clock, and the night was lighter. There was a moon hidden away somewhere behind the heavy, black clouds, and as their dark masses drifted by overhead, driven by the strong, southerly wind, a sort of ghostly twilight filtered through the rifts. In one of these moments of half light Everton discerned a solitary horseman riding slowly toward them. It was Rigon.

"Here comes th' brigadier-gineral commandin'. I've a mind t' pot him now, an' make sure. He may be in th' rear whin th' fun begins," whispered Cassidy, as the native halted within a few feet of them and leaned forward in the saddle, peering into the darkness toward the house. He was happily unconscious of the ten rifles leveled at his chest and the ten strong fingers on their hair triggers. For some time he sat motionless, looking like an appari-

tion in his white clothes; then, wheeling about, he disappeared into the darkness.

As he vanished the men drew a sigh of relief. The tension of the silence they had preserved had been severe. The recruit's teeth were chattering in his head from cold and suppressed excitement. The hour he had waited for so long, when he should actually smell powder in action, seemed to be at hand. In his heart he was not altogether glad that he had come.

Everton lay motionless as a statue, straining his eyes down the road. Cassidy softly turned the cut-off of his rifle to the extreme left, ran the bolt forward and back once, to assure himself that it was working properly, and pushed a cartridge into the chamber. Then he took a fresh chew of tobacco and waited. In the darkness his eyes sparkled.

The moments which followed dragged on slowly, as those moments do which come just before the first shots of an engagement are fired. The night continued to grow lighter and the rain continued to fall; not with the wind-driven fury of the earlier evening, but with a steady, persistent downpour, which chilled the recruit to the bone and made even Cassidy set his teeth a trifle closer on his tobacco. Suddenly the queer hoot of a tree lizard, sharp and rasping,

broke out in the stillness, and from far off on the Silay highroad there came the faint barking of a dog.

The croaking of that lizard and the barking of that dog were sounds which lingered in Daniel Everton's ears long afterwards. They remained indelibly stamped upon his memory as being associated with his last experience as a soldier. They marked, indeed, the ending of one stage of his life's journey and the beginning of another.

When about twenty minutes had elapsed, and it seemed to the recruit that he could bear the suspense no longer, he moved slightly and thrust the barrel of his rifle forward. As he was moving it, with his finger upon the trigger and his eyes fixed upon the road, several figures appeared suddenly from out of the darkness, their wet, white clothes giving them the air of very much bedraggled specters in the faint light of the approaching dawn.

Notwithstanding the fact that the recruit had spent five hours expecting, and alternately hoping for and dreading the coming of the enemy, and that he had rehearsed mentally many times just how they might be expected to come, and what he would do when he saw them, their sudden appearance from out of the darkness of the night was too much for his over-

wrought nerves. The finger which pressed the trigger of his rifle tightened suddenly, and the piece was discharged with a loud report. The bullet whizzed past Cassidy's ear and traveled on over the heads of the ladrones toward the mountains.

The advancing party halted in confusion, and Everton, taking advantage of their panic, gave the command to fire. A volley rang out, and he saw Rigon and two others fall as he led the way out of the ditch and charged down the road.

When the ladrones realized that they had a force and not an individual to deal with, the compact group of white-robed figures broke suddenly and seemed to dissolve into the darkness, as its members scattered in every direction. A few of the cooler heads among them preserved sufficient of their presence of mind to kneel and fire a shot in return. All of these shots went wide of the mark but one, and that one passed through Everton's chest just above the heart. He toppled over into the mud and lay there gasping.

"Cease firing!" yelled Cassidy an instant later. "What in hell ar' yez shootin' at?"

The shooting ceased. The last of the ladrones had disappeared, and they were slinking away across the paddy-fields under cover of the darkness.

At this juncture Lieutenant Taylor came up with his men to reinforce the others. Pursuit of the enemy on such a night was out of the question, so very tenderly they picked up the wounded man and carried him into the house. There was a minute hole in his blue shirt, and around it the dull red stain was deepening momentarily.

Just as the day was breaking, and what would have been a glorious sunrise in the dry season, but was only a dull, gray twilight now, was bringing into view the sodden cane fields, beaten and trampled upon by the rain as by an army, the door of Paris's room opened and Dr. Fairchild came out. Taylor and Paris sat in the great hall, the khaki uniform of the former stained with the mud and clay in which he had lain the greater part of the night. The old planter was attired in his sleeping garments, a suit of white pajamas, which seemed to differ in no way from the ones he had worn at dinner two nights before. On the stand in front of them were a bottle of whisky and several glasses. The doctor, whose clothes were, like those of his friend, wringing wet, advanced to the table, and pouring out a stiff drink, tossed it off. Putting the glass back on the table, he said briefly: "He's got a chance."

"Do you think so?" asked Taylor in reply, his face brightening. "It looked pretty bad to me."

"It's a Mauser wound through the left lung. Fortunate for him that it wasn't one of those brass Remingtons. If it had been, it would be all night with him."

"I suppose he'll have to stay here?"

"For the present, certainly. If all goes well, you might move him in to quarters in a week or so. Everything depends now on his being kept quiet. I'll stay here until you can send out one of the hospital men. You'd better send Brown."

"Well, then, I think we'll start back."

"Don't be in any hurry about Brown," said Fairchild. "I can stay here until evening. I think I'll turn in now and get some sleep."

While Fairchild had been dressing Everton's wound, as well as that of the only wounded enemy who had fallen, Paris had provided the men with a comfortable breakfast; so that when they fell in, in response to Taylor's command, and resumed the march back to Silay, they looked upon life from the standpoint of a full stomach. They conversed cheerfully as they plodded back through the thick mud.

"If 'twasn't fer losin' Everton," said Cassidy, as he readjusted his gun-sling so as to throw his rifle

across his broad back, "I'd be well satisfied with th' raysult av th' night's wurk. Four dead naygurs, wan av which is a captain-gineral, iv'ry night, wud soon impriss upon th' oncivilized inhabitants th' determination av th' United States t' befrind thim."

"I hopes ve don'd lose Everdon," said Redder.

"An' so do I; but if we shud—so be it. As th' great Naypoleon sez, 'ye can't hav' ham omelets without breakin' eggs an' killin' pork. Speakin' av pork, I've a word to say t' th' rookie who fired off his gun without bein' toldt to, an' so sp'iled wan of th' decissive battles av hist'ry—th' 'leventh, I believe it wud have bin."

"I couldn't help it," said the Third Avenue recruit, sulkily. "I had my hand on the trigger, and it went off accidentally."

"He didn't know it war loaded," explained the man from Tennessee.

"Well, th' nixt time you want t' have wan av thim accidents," continued Cassidy, "I ricommind, in th' interests av th' servis, that you have th' muzzle ag'in your own chist and not ag'in my ear."

"I didn't know it was near your ear," said the recruit in a choking voice, for he was on the verge of tears.

"Didn't you indade, now? Well, th' conscious-

niss av' your good intintions wud be very comfortin' t' th' families av anny wan af us what happens t' be made a corpse av be your ignorance as t' where yer gun's p'intin' at. But always raymimbir thot nixt t' salutin' an officer, there's nothin' so important as not shootin' yer own min."

The ball of ridicule, set rolling by the good-humored Cassidy, was kept in motion by the other men, so that before they reached Silay the recruit, whose lack of discipline had spoiled the chance of a possible fight, was on the verge of suicide. He had in him the making of a good soldier, but the making of a soldier out of such raw material is never a gentle process.

Chapter VI

MARSHALL EVERTON RECEIVES A CALL

ON an oppressively hot evening in September, three months after the skirmish with Rigon's band at the Paris hacienda, an old man walked slowly up Madison Avenue, his head bowed and his eyes on the pavement at his feet. He was dressed with great care, a fact which made it apparent to the observing passersby that he had not lacked assistance in making his toilet. Men of forty may preserve an immaculate exterior without the aid of a valet, but when one who is close upon seventy is found as scrupulously garbed as his grandsons, it usually indicates that the services of that useful domestic have not been dispensed with.

The city seemed the hotter for the hush which had fallen upon it with the close of day. During the busy hours, with the rush and turmoil of traffic, there had been in its active, aggressive life something to distract him from the heat of day; but now that the comparative quiet of evening had fallen

upon the broad avenues with their rows of deserted residences, the old man became painfully conscious of a weakness and lassitude.

He was occupied with his own reflections, and if his face was in any way indicative of them, they must have been far from agreeable. He was clean-shaven, and the refined lips were compressed tightly. It was the mouth of a weak man, who was aware of his own weakness and desirous of combating it.

He walked with the persistent, jerky step peculiar to old men, who think that unless they do their five or six miles each day they will lose forever their hold upon youth and vitality and fall into a decline; by this means not infrequently hastening the very decline they seek to avoid.

As he passed one of the side streets he was run into and nearly overturned by a small urchin, fleeing madly down the avenue, shrieking out the details of an unusually revolting murder. Under the little gamin's arm were several crumpled copies of one of those daily journals which are as soiled, morally, on leaving the press as they are materially after they have passed through half-a-dozen pairs of unwashed hands. The vendor was endowed with a deep and penetrating voice, with which he summed up the ghastly details of the affair, indicating that for the

moderate price of a penny the respectable looking old man could have all the details of the horror, to take home and enjoy at his leisure.

It was a small body, but it had been impelled with considerable force, and as the arab disentangled himself and pursued his wild course down town, in search of a purchaser for his sensation, the old man, overcome with the heat and shock, stood trembling and looking up at the houses. Their unfamiliar aspect caused him to wipe his glasses and mutter to himself, "Dear me! Dear me! I must have passed the house." Turning, he retraced his steps for two blocks, and then ascended the steps of a brownstone dwelling. Feeling for his keys, only to find that he had left them in his office, he rang the bell.

The summons was answered so quickly as to indicate that the portly, middle-aged butler who opened the door had been anxiously awaiting his master's return.

"You seem tired, Mr. Everton," he said. "I am afraid you have walked too far."

"Eh? Yes, John; what is it?" replied the old man querulously.

"I said that dinner is ready when you care to have it served, sir," replied John, who saw no good

in carrying veracity too far on some occasions. He took the hat and stick, placed them upon the hat-rack, and quickly brought forward a small salver, on which was a glass of brandy beaten up with an egg.

"Drink this, sir," he said, in the half respectful, half authoritative manner which those who have the care of the aged adopt. "It will do you good."

"Thank you, John," said Mr. Everton. "You are very thoughtful."

Upon entering the next room, which was used as a study, he found a student lamp burning brightly upon the table, and beside it a copy of the "Evening Post." He sank into the big arm-chair by the table and lay back as though exhausted.

John stood beside him for some minutes, until the stimulant began to take effect. By degrees Mr. Everton's breathing lost its irregular, exhausted character, and the color came back into the refined, pallid face, on which the perspiration stood out prominently.

"Well, John?" he inquired at length, noticing that the servant was still in the room. "What do you want?"

"Two ladies called to see you this afternoon, sir."

"Two ladies—to see me?" repeated the old man incredulously.

"Yes, sir. Mrs. Cartwright and Miss Fairchild."

"Did they leave any message?" Mr. Everton continued, after a pause of some duration—an interval which he had employed in thought and in drumming with his thin, white hands upon the arm of his chair.

"Yes, sir. They said they were passing through town and would call again this evening. Miss Fairchild said she hoped you were well, and that she wished to see you about something very particular. I told them you were nearly always at home in the evenings, sir."

While John was speaking, Mr. Everton leaned back in his chair and stared vacantly, straight in front of him. There was a half-frightened look on the old man's face, which the fact that a very attractive young woman wished to see him seemed hardly to justify. Finally he glanced up at the mantel, and his eyes fell upon the clock, which was ticking noisily. Its hands pointed to a quarter before eight. John followed his master's gaze.

"Shall I serve dinner at once?" he asked.

"I shall only require a cup of tea and a piece of dry toast," replied Mr. Everton, who had read some-

where that exercise and a light diet would prolong life.

John's face clouded. His efforts to keep body and soul together in the old man were arduous. "I have a small filét for you, sir, and a clear soup," he said, with the air of one imparting in confidence a secret of state, as he advanced to the side of his master's chair. "Do try to eat a little of it, sir."

"It will distress me if I do," replied the old man, decisively. "No; I think just the tea and toast, John; just the tea and toast."

The servant now had recourse to a strategy, as had often been necessary before. "You see, sir," he said in an insinuating tone, "the servants has begun to talk about your not eatin' enough to keep a bird alive—that's how the cook puts it. And if they was to talk like that outside, I'm afraid people might think your health was a failin', sir."

The ruse was successful, for he had touched his master on his most sensitive point. If there was anything the old man dreaded it was that his neighbors should suspect that advance of old age which he was not willing to admit to himself. This thought, combined with the stimulant he had taken, caused him to pull himself together and rise to his feet.

"Perhaps you are right, John," he said briskly, rubbing his hands together—those hands which were always cold, no matter what the heat of the day. "I am apt to forget about eating; but my appetite is as healthy as ever, John—as healthy as ever."

"Of course, sir," assented the delighted servant. "Will you sit down now?"

The master sought the dining-room with the same determined step with which he had walked all the way from his office, and ate his soup with trembling hands. As the meal progressed, John saw that his glass was kept full of a rich port, and by deft little maneuvers managed to make him eat a fairly good meal.

When it was over, Mr. Everton withdrew to the study once more and resumed his arm-chair. John brought in the coffee, and unfolded the paper, as though to remind the old man of his accustomed evening occupation. He hesitated when he had done these things, waiting a chance to speak.

"Well, John; what is it?" inquired the old man, more genially than he had spoken before dinner.

"I beg pardon, sir; I only wanted to ask whether you have heard anything more from Mr. Daniel?" There was an anxiety and affection in the speaker's voice as he half timidly made the inquiry.

"No; not since the doctor cabled that he was out of danger from his wound, but ill with fever."

"He'll be coming home when he's well, I suppose, sir?"

"God knows."

The old servant started at this somewhat remarkable reply, and looked at Mr. Everton anxiously. He spoke again, but as the words left his lips they were drowned in a loud ring at the door-bell.

"What's that?" cried Mr. Everton, startled, and trembling visibly.

"The ladies, come back—no doubt. Shall I show them in, sir?"

"Ah, yes; of course. I had forgotten."

John left the room, and a moment later drew aside the portières and announced Mrs. Cartwright and Miss Fairchild.

As the latter advanced to Mr. Everton and held out her hand, the soft light from the student lamp fell upon a graceful form, just above the average height, and upon a face which can best be described as exceptional. The eyes were exceptionally large, and there was a soft depth to them which, if the eyes are in very truth the windows of the soul, gave one the impression that the soul itself was exceptional. The lips were parted in a slight smile—one

of those involuntary smiles which have nothing forced about them, and which gently but irresistibly demand a smile in return. Her forehead was high, and the upper part of her face suggested thought, as the lower did feeling. Around the smooth, white surface the hair grew prettily. It was of a brown which in certain lights becomes golden and again almost red.

She was very handsome, with the beauty of character, and yet there was none of the regularity of feature which constitutes the conventional type of beauty from an artist's standpoint.

If one met her he would retain—and sometimes retain for a very long time—the impression that she was beautiful, and yet if he had seen her photograph he would have passed it by unnoticed. The greatest beauties of the human face are only perceptible to the human eye. The cold eye of the camera fails to record them.

Mr. Everton bowed over her hand with a grave courtesy. "I am sorry to have put you to the inconvenience of a second call," he said. "If you had left word where you were stopping — I should——"

"It is no trouble," she replied, interrupting him, it being one of the very rare cases in which an

interruption is civil rather than rude. "Let me present you to my cousin, Mrs. Cartwright. Laura, this is Mr. Everton, my trustee."

Miss Fairchild's eyes were upon the other woman as she spoke, so that she failed to notice the little spasm which passed over Mr. Everton's face at the mention of the word "trustee." By the time they were seated it had passed. He leaned back in his chair and clasped his hands together.

"It is early for you to be in town," he said at length, after waiting a moment for his visitors to begin the conversation.

"Yes," replied Constance, drawing off her glove and adjusting one of her rings. "But we are here for the day only. I wanted to see you on a matter of some importance, and Mrs. Cartwright wanted to do some shopping."

"I am at your service, at any time," replied Mr. Everton, clasping his thin hands a little tighter together and compressing his lips firmly, as though dreading the fall of some sword of Damocles. "What can I do for you?"

Miss Fairchild gave him a glimpse of her fine white teeth in a merry little laugh. "Something that will surprise you," she said. "So be prepared for a shock."

"I am sorry to have put you to the inconvenience of a second call," he said

Mr. Everton was relieved, and smiled in return. There could be no sword of Damocles in what she was about to say, since she could laugh at the thought of it.

"I am all impatience," he observed. "What is it?"

"I want to go to the Philippines," replied Constance.

Mr. Everton was dumfounded. If his attractive young ward had announced her intention of taking an outing in the wilds of Thibet he could not have been more so. To him the Philippines were a group of islands swimming in blood and overrun by war. The inhabitants were savages, and the climate was deadly to all but the aforesaid savages. He had a son out there, and that son had recently been wounded nigh unto death. That his ward should contemplate exposing her fair young person to a similar fate was inexplicable to him.

"To the Philippines!" he exclaimed.

"Yes, certainly," replied his ward. "Why not? Mrs. Cartwright is going out to join her husband, a major in the Sixth Artillery, and I have had a letter from Dick, saying that he is ordered to the Second Reserve hospital. Mrs. Cartwright will have a house in Manila, so I shall be taken care of."

"But is it safe?" inquired Mr. Everton, dubiously.

Up to this time Mrs. Major Cartwright, as she was known to the inhabitants of various military posts she had commanded, had taken no part in the conversation. This was in no way due to any natural diffidence, but rather to her loss of breath. Like a veteran campaigner, she had husbanded all her resources for the time when she should begin to talk. This time had now come.

"Safe? My dear Mr. Everton!" she exclaimed. "Why, of course it is, and has been for months. There are any amount of American ladies in Manila. The colonel (Major Cartwright was a lieutenant-colonel by brevet only) has been writing to me by every mail, urging me to join him."

As a matter of fact, her husband's anxiety—if he felt any—to have his wife join him had been carefully concealed. Most of the anxiety had been on Mrs. Cartwright's side, and she had finally wrung from him a consent to her coming out with her daughter, and a reluctant admission that "it was safe enough, and had been all along, for that matter."

As the major had written those words, he had wished vaguely that the town might be attacked, or the plague break out, or something happen to keep back the autocratic wife, whom he foresaw was soon

to come out and put an end to the first period of rest he had known for ten years. The sound of volley firing "out on the lines" had grown fainter, as the insurgent force had retreated farther and farther up country, and had finally died away, but the overpowering voice of Mrs. Cartwright was clamoring to be heard, and the hour of submission was at hand. So he had sent the letter, and was even now enjoying the last days of his freedom.

"You see, Mr. Everton," continued Constance, "the fighting has all taken place outside of Manila. It's quite safe in the town itself."

"There was a battle in Manila last February," persisted the old man. He was unused to war, and the advisability of a woman's going in September to a city which had been a scene of a battle in February was by no means evident to his mind.

"The first outbreak, of course," rejoined Mrs. Cartwright. "But the enemy were driven out then and have never been back since."

"I should consider the hostilities now in progress in the Philippines an objectionable feature—especially for ladies traveling alone."

"We do not propose to travel about the country, and I assure you, Mr. Everton, the town is quite safe. Colonel Cartwright would not think of exposing me

to any danger. You may make your mind quite easy on that score."

"But the climate—" Mr. Everton protested, thinking of the cyclones which lift up great ships and carry them miles inland, and also of the plague and kindred disorders.

"Much better than it is represented," affirmed Mrs. Cartwright, who had never been there. "Quite enjoyable in the right season—or at least so I am informed."

"Is this the right season?"

"The rains," observed Mrs. Cartwright, who had been reading up on the Philippines, "begin some time between April and July and last until December or January; then the dry season begins."

Constance counted on her fingers and broke in upon the conversation. "I don't believe it's as bad as that, Cousin Laura; if it is, the mud has hardly time to dry."

Mr. Everton smiled at this. It amused him to see how the younger woman had dropped out of the discussion as Mrs. Cartwright entered the lists. He looked at the well-poised girl before him and made up his mind that if she had decided to go to the Philippines it was probably not an unwise thing to do. Then he looked at Mrs. Cartwright, who was

fat, fifty, and aggressive, and came to the conclusion that if there were comforts to be had in Manila she would have them. Altogether, he thought, the two women were not illy adapted to be companions on a journey to a distant, half-civilized land. Then a new difficulty presented itself to his farseeing, legal mind.

"Major Cartwright may have to remain out there a number of years," he said. "In that case, how will you get home?"

"I had thought of that, of course," replied Constance. "You see, my brother's contract expires in five months and he will not renew it. When he wrote, suggesting that I come out, he said that he would bring me home through India, to Europe, in the spring."

"You see how beautifully Constance has arranged it all," said Mrs. Cartwright. "Do give your consent, Mr. Everton. There are already many American women in Manila, and I assure you it's quite safe."

"It is not a case in which my consent is necessary, Mrs. Cartwright," he replied. "I am not Miss Fairchild's guardian, but merely her trustee. She is at liberty to do as she wishes in all matters. I merely have the honor of supplying her with funds from time to time."

"Does that mean that you would refuse your consent if it was necessary?" inquired Constance, with a pretty, defiant toss of her head.

"By no means," said Mr. Everton, smiling. "I confess that of late I have not followed the progress of events in the Philippines very closely. However, since you have, and are not afraid to go, I have nothing to say."

There was a short pause in the conversation, during which Constance examined one of the rings on her hand critically. She was thinking over what she wished to say. After a moment's consideration she inquired: "Speaking of the Philippines; what do you hear from your son?"

"From Daniel? Nothing of late. You know he was very dangerously wounded about three months ago. When last I heard he was out of danger. That was three weeks ago."

Constance was sitting with her face to the student lamp. When Mr. Everton referred to his son having been wounded, the hand which was playing with the ring went up as though to shade the soft, brown eyes from the light. It was a simple gesture, which did not convey any meaning to the old man or to Mrs. Cartwright. She covered her eyes for the fraction of a minute, and then the hand strayed off to

a rebellious lock of brown hair over the small ear, smoothed and arranged it. When it was quite in place she said, quietly and simply:

"I did not know it—and—I am very, very sorry."

Mrs. Cartwright was more profuse in her expressions of sympathy. "I can feel for you, dear Mr. Everton," she said. "We, of the army, know how hard such things are to bear. It is a sad thing, this war."

"I am not of the army," replied Mr. Everton simply; "but it has been hard for me."

Constance looked at the old man, with eyes that did not see quite clearly. The extreme loneliness and sadness of his lot became apparent to her, and she wished that she had violated the proprieties by leaving Mrs. Cartwright behind at the hotel. She would have liked to say more, but could not trust her voice.

"You say it is three months since your son was hurt?" the older woman continued. "Men usually recover from wounds in less time than that—unless the wounds are mortal."

"Ah, yes," assented Mr. Everton; "but he has had a fever."

"You must forgive me for speaking so lightly of

my own plans when you have such a terrible sorrow on your mind," said Constance.

He waved his hand with a gesture of courteous depreciation. "It is an old story to me now," he said. "I was not aware that you knew Daniel."

"I met him two years ago in Rome."

"I hope you will see him if you go out to the Philippines."

"I trust so—if he is in Manila," replied Constance.

"He is out a short distance from there, on the island of Negros." Mr. Everton had very carefully looked up the island in question, in the atlas, and had ascertained that it was the same distance from Manila that Bangor, Maine, is from New York, and based his observation on this knowledge, not considering that the transportation facilities were of a different order.

"He will receive his discharge as soon as he recovers," he added.

"His discharge!" exclaimed Mrs. Cartwright in amazement. "Do you mean that he is an enlisted man?"

"He is a sergeant. He was in Cuba, and was promoted afterward."

Mrs. Cartwright had been too long the wife of an

army officer not to feel surprised at this information. She concealed her curiosity, however, and merely asked: "How did he happen to go into the ranks?"

"He preferred to," replied Mr. Everton. "He said he had no military knowledge and did not want a commission. He could have gotten one easily enough."

"Well, I should hope so. So he is what we call a Volunteer-Regular?"

"What is that, Cousin Laura?" inquired Miss Fairchild.

"Just what it says, my dear. A soldier who volunteered for the war, but enlisted in the regular army."

"Ah, yes; I see," responded Constance, buttoning her glove. She did not wish to ask any more questions, being aware that Mrs. Cartwright was quick at making inferences. So quick, in fact, that they were usually erroneous when made. "Shall we go now?" she suggested, rising. Mrs. Cartwright followed her example, as did Mr. Everton, and Constance noticed, with a little pang, that as the latter arose he was obliged to steady himself for a moment against his chair. He looked very old and weak.

"I will come and see you at your office, Mr. Everton," she said, holding out her hand, over which he

again bowed with a half-timid grace, "to arrange about funds for my trip. I am glad you do not entirely disapprove of it."

"You are your own mistress, of course," responded her trustee, with a smile, "and a very capable one, too—eh, Mrs. Cartwright?"

"She certainly is," replied the older woman absently, disentangling the bead trimming of her gown, which had caught in her chair as she arose. "I only wish my girl was as much so."

"Well, good-by for the present," said Constance, turning to go. Then, stopping, she added, as though the idea had just come to her, "If you have news of your son at any time, I would be glad to have you drop me a line and tell me of it. We became great friends that winter in Rome."

"You are very kind."

John stood for several minutes in the open doorway, watching the cab drive away down the deserted street and listening to the muffled sound of the horse's hoofs upon the asphalt. Then he closed the door softly and glanced into the study. Mr. Everton was sitting by the student lamp, his body bent and his thin, haggard face turned toward the window. He presented a pitiable picture of lonely old age, and the

servant regarded him with anxiety and affection. "Something's gone wrong," he muttered, as he withdrew to the dining-room, there to wait until Mr. Everton should be ready to retire. "Has been wrong for some time back. Mr. Daniel had ought to come home."

Chapter VII

A BREACH OF TRUST

ONE of the best evidences of the insignificant parts most men play in the drama of their generation lies in the brevity with which their life histories may be told. Not in all detail, perhaps, but sufficiently so to recount all their great hopes and failures, all their little successes and achievements.

Marshall Everton was a widower with an only son, and that son was at the other side of the earth, fighting fever and a dangerous wound beneath the roof of Isidro Paris. When Daniel had enlisted two years before, it had caused his father more than one pang, for while of an undemonstrative nature, he loved his son, and looked upon him as the mainstay of his old age. It had come to pass, however, that he now dreaded the return of this son more than he had dreaded his departure at the outbreak of the Spanish war. Dreaded it as one who fears to look another in the face, lest that other should read

in his own a secret which he fancied the long hours of remorse had written there.

Neither old age nor loneliness was the cause of Mr. Everton's dejection. His life had been successful for many years, and his feet had trodden upon well beaten, easy paths. Great respectability, affluence, and some considerable degree of power had been his for a long time, and then, in a year, he had seen the whole outlook change. For, late in life, he had, disregarding all the principles which had ruled his professional life, been guilty of what the law calls, by the harsh, uncompromising term, "embezzlement."

Some six years before the night when Miss Fairchild called upon him, her father, one of his oldest clients and friends, had died, leaving a large fortune. Under the terms of the will one half was bequeathed to Dr. Richard Fairchild absolutely, and the other was to be held in trust for Constance, then a girl of seventeen. Marshall Everton had been named as trustee, and he was to turn over the principal to the beneficiary when she reached the age of twenty-four.

A year afterwards there occurred one of those periods of financial depression and panic which sometimes sweep over nations, as though sent by an all-wise Providence to show mortal men that the only

safe investments are education and health. It swept away all of Mr. Everton's private fortune, which was considerable, but which he had invested in a corporation of speculative tendencies and in the stock of a bank with which he had dealt for years. The former went into the hands of a receiver, and the latter closed its doors one morning, leaving Mr. Everton with nothing but his law practice.

Men do not easily recover from such blows as this when they fall late in life. Whether the shock of the great misfortune weakened in some mysterious way the moral sense of the man, or whether a looseness of morals, as regards money matters, which had all his life lain dormant was now brought to the surface, it would be difficult to judge. However it may have been, he yielded to the temptation which shortly presented itself.

During the earlier years of his life Mr. Everton had avoided Wall Street speculations as men do who have but a comfortable fortune for which they have worked hard, but now he listened to the specious arguments of a skillful promoter, who pointed out to him an unequaled opportunity for making a fortune in a mining venture in New Mexico. This promoter called upon the old man evenings, and described, in glowing terms, the vast, undeveloped wealth which

lay hidden away but a few feet beneath the surface, and which would soon be yielded forth for his, the promoter's benefit. Only a small capital was needed to remove the few feet of earth referred to and expose the wealth glittering below. The property had been examined by mining experts of the first order, and they had reported so favorably that there seemed no possible doubt that the investment would soon yield thirty per cent., and the stock advance to a proportional value.

The promoter very carefully avoided any hint at Mr. Everton's being able to secure stock in this Eldorado.

The best business men are deceived sometimes by such prospectuses as this, and Mr. Everton was a better lawyer than he was a business man. Moreover, the promoter was somewhat prominent in business and social circles, and was reputed to be a man successful in most of the ventures which he undertook. And so he was, but the same could not always be said for those who shared with him in his business enterprises. It seemed hard to Mr. Everton that others should be able to turn their money over so quickly, while he was obliged to plod on in the old, unprogressive way; and in an unlucky moment he said as much to the promoter.

The mining man agreed with him, but unfortunately the property was owned by a few men, no one of whom would be willing to dispose of any of his stock. It was a great pity; the promoter was willing to agree with Mr. Everton on that score.

He was a financier who had Shakespeare, as well as science, at his fingers' ends. He reminded the old man that "There comes a tide in the affairs of men which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune," and had little difficulty in convincing him that this particular mining venture was his "tide," which might never rise so high again. When he went away he volunteered to arrange the matter for Mr. Everton, if it was in any way possible to do so. And Mr. Everton thanked him warmly.

He "arranged it" within the week, and his friend became the owner of some thirty thousand dollars' worth of the capital stock of the La Guara Mining Company, Limited, of New Mexico and Arizona; having, through the efforts of the promoter, succeeded in getting it at what the promoter called a remarkable figure. It was a remarkable figure; the most so of any ever commanded by the shares of the corporation, and to avail himself of the opportunity Mr. Everton borrowed thirty thousand dollars from the trust estate of Constance Fairchild.

He used many arguments to convince himself that this was not morally wrong, though as a lawyer he knew well enough what the legal aspect of the case was. He reflected that if, by any chance (and he honestly believed that there was no such chance), he lost the money, he could make it up out of the income from his law practice before the time came for the accounting.

In three months from the time the sale was made, the mining experts discovered that there was no water near enough to the property to enable them to work it, much to the regret of the promoter, who had himself lost over a hundred thousand dollars. They had all been equally unfortunate in the matter. The concern had been capitalized at half a million, on the promise of future returns. Some five or ten thousand had been advanced to purchase the land, and the rest of the hundred thousand which the promoter lost was money which he would have made had the stock advanced, on the general market, to the figure which Mr. Everton paid for his.

Two years had passed since then, and during them Marshall Everton had tried, conscientiously, to make up the deficit. He saved ten thousand dollars out of his income one year, and then lost it in a frantic effort to double it in Wall Street. It seemed as

tho the first step in the wrong direction had, instead of being a lesson to him, been just the reverse. He reduced his household expenditures to such a degree that John, who had been in the employ of the Everton family for twenty years, felt it incumbent on him to explain to the cook, who was also an old family servant, that "there warn't no use of it, of course. It was just a hobby of Mr. Everton's. Most men got like that as they got on in life."

His economies were of no avail, for they were offset by a steady decrease in his income from his law practice. His partner, a younger, more active man, left the firm for another and more pushing one, and Marshall Everton soon discovered that he had outlived his professional usefulness. The deficit of thirty thousand still remained to stare him in the face by day and ring in his ears at night. Being of a sensitive temperament, his remorse was acute, and he dreaded to look at a newspaper, lest he should read of the conviction and imprisonment of some poor wretch whose fault had been no worse than his own.

The time had now come when he had something worse to face than the torturing voice of his conscience. In five months more the accounting would have to be made, and then the secret, which was

slowly but surely wearing out both mind and body, would be a secret no longer. It would have to become public property, and his fall would be as great as his former prosperity had been. He thought of every enemy he had ever made, with the reflection that each would be glad to hear of his disgrace. This fear became, in time, a sort of monomania. He hesitated to meet an acquaintance, thinking that, in some way, his secret had leaked out, and the acquaintance would cut him. He watched, with morbid interest, the faces of his oldest friends when he happened to meet them, which was but rarely now, for out of business hours he lived the life of a recluse, to see if their greetings were as cordial as ever. And if one of them was hurried and showed any less cordiality than formerly, he would worry over the fact for days.

When he had looked into the fair, young face of his ward that evening, and had seen the sympathy in her eyes as he spoke of his son, he had been strongly tempted to confess his fault, and beg her, for that son's sake, to overlook it. The presence of the older woman had prevented any such course, however, and the opportunity passed. Had he but known it, it would have been far kinder to Constance to have spoken then.

When an upright and honest man makes a misstep in life, instead of weakening his moral principles it not infrequently strengthens them. If he has not been able to gain the strength of a temptation resisted, he can, at least, gain the strength which comes from remorse. This was the case with Mr. Everton, and he now found himself more conscientious than ever, and more anxious to do what he thought was his duty. And that was very painful.

For some time, he had realized that his son ought to know the state of affairs, both as regards their financial ruin and also as regards the impending disgrace, which he saw was soon to come to them. It might be that that son would not return home under the circumstances. In any event, he ought to be notified of what he might have to face in the way of publicity and dishonor. It was not just that he should remain in ignorance until the day of his arrival home.

Marshall Everton roused himself with an effort from the reverie into which he had fallen when the two women had left, and in which he had been painfully buried for two hours. He arose and crossed unsteadily to his desk, muttering: "There is no better time than the present; to-morrow I may not have the strength."

He wrote slowly, covering several pages with the story of just what he had done, omitting nothing but the remorse which had followed the act and the temptation which had preceded it. He could tell his son of his wrong, but he would not excuse it or attempt to lessen the severity of that son's judgment.

It was finished at last; sealed, and directed. A heavy sigh escaped him as, with trembling hands, he placed the stamp upon the envelope.

"What is it, sir? Anything very wrong, sir?"

It was John who spoke. For more than two hours he had waited patiently in the dining-room for his master to retire, and now stood at his side, watching him anxiously.

"No, no; there's nothing wrong. What should be?"

"Nothing, of course, sir. I thought as how you spoke; that was all."

"Take this letter, John, and mail it."

"Yes, sir. But I'll wait till I've seen you safe up to bed first. It's uncommon late—most midnight."

"Is it, indeed? I am sorry to have kept you so late."

"Don't speak of it, sir. I should most likely have stayed up, anyhow."

Mr. Everton arose and walked slowly to the door. The effort of writing to his son had been almost too much for him. When he reached the threshold he tottered, and would have fallen but for the strong arm of the servant.

"Do you feel very weak? Would you like a glass of brandy, sir?" asked John.

"No, thank you. I felt the heat for the moment, that's all."

Very slowly and cautiously the pair ascended the stairs. When they were about half-way to the top, Mr. Everton paused to take breath. "I'm afraid, John," he said, "that there's no doubt about it."

"About what, sir?"

"About my being old," replied Mr. Everton, beginning once more to mount the stairs. "I am old —very old."

"Nonsense! You've many a good year before you yet."

"If I had died just six years ago," continued Mr. Everton, looking straight in front of him, "it would have been a good thing—a very good thing."

With this curious observation he gained the top of the stairs and, dismissing John, entered his room.

Chapter VIII

MERCEDES

THE rainy season was well advanced before Daniel Everton recovered sufficiently to take any notice of his surroundings. His wound healed rapidly enough, but a low fever, which had seized upon his weakened frame, kept him between life and death for many weeks. The tide turned at last, however, and he slowly crept back to life. He still occupied the room into which he had been carried on the night when he received his wound, as Paris had met all suggestions as to his removal with impatient abruptness. "The man was hurt while guarding my property," he had said, "and do you think I will allow him to be taken away now? Such is not the gratitude of Isidro Paris."

In after years, when he looked back upon this long illness, there was one day which stood out in sharp relief against the background of the long weeks of restless pain; when he seemed to come out of his state of mental confusion into a clearer atmosphere.

It was the day which marked the turning-point in his sickness—when the fever left him to grope his way back to life and strength.

One afternoon in the first week of September, the big windows which opened out of his room upon the broad veranda were thrown open, admitting a soft breeze from the sea. The skies had, apparently, exhausted themselves with the long months of violent rain and wind, and it was but a gentle shower that fell upon the tin roof of the building as Everton opened his eyes. The sound was very soothing to his ears, tired with the discordant voices which he had heard so long in his delirium.

As he glanced wearily at the opposite wall, he felt the not unpleasant languor which comes with extreme weakness. Upon a little stand by his bedside there was a cooling drink. He turned and stretched out his hand to take it, but fell back, overcome by the exertion.

From a big chair in one corner of the room a young girl arose, and crossing to his side placed the glass to his lips. She was obliged to slip her other arm around his neck to support the head, which was throbbing wildly. He drank eagerly, and then lay back upon his pillow, fixing his eyes upon her face.

The most recent companions of his delirium had

been natives—insurgents—who had held him prisoner and compelled him to spend night and day carrying heavy sacks of rice up and down mountains, over rough trails, and through icy rivers, which chilled him to the bone; after which they would let him halt for a while on burning plains, where there was no shade and where his head would ache with the blinding, splitting ache which comes in a desert from heat and thirst.

And now he found himself in a cool, dark room, and by his side there stood a white woman, who was fair to look upon. So he regarded her long and searchingly, and she, thinking that he was still delirious, returned his gaze without self-consciousness or shyness.

She was about seventeen, and lovely with the southern loveliness of premature maturity—a variety which makes charming, altho not enduring, types of feminine beauty. Over her white shoulders—there was hardly enough native blood in her veins to be apparent in her coloring—her glossy, black hair fell in luxuriant, waving masses. Her face was plump and round, and her mouth beautifully formed. Her chin was, if anything, a trifle too full for beauty, but that was one of those defects which are not noticed while youth lasts.

Whatever defects Mercedes Paris may have had, Everton did not observe them on this occasion, having no one to compare her with but old Benita, who had been one of the most hideous figures in the nightmare through which he had struggled for three long months. As his eyes wandered from her face, he noticed that she wore the native costume, and wondered fretfully what this white girl was doing there, dressed in Benita's clothes.

"Who are you?" he asked, faintly.

They were the first conscious words he had spoken, and the color mounted to the clear, olive cheeks of the young girl as she heard them. Quickly setting the glass back upon the table, she crept out of the room in confusion. A moment later he heard her speak to those outside; then a firm step crossed the hall, and Dr. Fairchild was standing by his bedside.

"Well, Everton. How do you find yourself?" the physician inquired, kindly.

"Very weak, sir," replied the sick man. "Have I been ill long?"

"Matter of months—more or less. Never mind. Better not talk."

Everton nodded slightly and gazed at the shadows on the ceiling. After a moment he aroused himself by an effort and asked: "Am I going to live?"

"Yes," said the doctor, simply.

The other smiled to show that he understood, and then closed his eyes. The light, dim as it was, hurt him. Fairchild stood by his side until his heavy breathing assured him that his patient was asleep, and looked curiously at the face of the man whose fight with death had been fought and won against such heavy odds.

It was one to interest a character student, and for some time Fairchild had indulged in some speculations as to the motive which had actuated this man to enlist. The face, which, like the body, was thin almost to emaciation, was quite deeply marked. There are lines in the human countenance which seem to lie beneath the surface in health, but which come out after a long illness and tell their story. His hair—which had grown a little thin and a little gray during his illness—was tossed back from a high, well-shaped forehead. His beard had grown long, and was unkempt and straggling.

"A gentleman—somewhat out of repair," was Fairchild's mental comment.

As the days passed on, Everton's convalescence progressed rapidly. He was soon well enough to be moved to a cane chair on the veranda, in which he would lie for hours at a time, watching the white

sails of the Paris sugar *lorchas* on their voyages to Iloilo, or dozing contentedly, lulled by the soft rustling of the bamboo brake in Señor Isidro's garden.

Then, later on, as he grew strong enough, he would walk or drive about the hacienda, in the management of which he showed an interest which pleased and flattered the old planter.

The two men grew to be very good friends during this time. Everton had been anxious to repay his host in some measure for his kindness, and had found ways in which he was able to be of great assistance to him. Paris was a hard worker, as Filipinos go, but he had a decided hatred of anything connected with pen and ink, and his bookkeeping was of the most primitive description. Everton offered to help him one day when he was paying off his laborers, and the offer was gladly accepted. From this small beginning the American had come, in a few weeks, to be almost indispensable. He simplified Paris's accounts for him, besides indicating several little ways in which economy could be practised, and the sugar output of the hacienda be increased. He also discovered that his too good-natured friend was being robbed by his underlings in many petty ways, and explained to him how this could be prevented.

"What you really need," he had said one day,

when he had succeeded in convincing his host that one of the oldest and most trusted of the hacienda hands had been practising, unsuspected, a petty dishonesty for years, "is an overseer whom you can trust."

"Ah, yes, my son," replied the shrewd old man. "No doubt such a one would be invaluable. But where am I to get him? An honest man is not always easily found, and, after all, I am not robbed as much as some of my friends."

Late in the afternoon of a day some four weeks after the soldier's convalescence had begun, he and his host were together upon the broad veranda which served as a living room to the inmates of the big house. They had just returned from a visit to the sugar mills, and Paris had explained the process of crushing out the sugar from the cane.

"What do you think of my machinery?" he asked, as he handed the American a cigar and lit one himself.

"Well," replied Everton, "I noticed that it does not get all the juice out of the cane."

"No? It's the only kind I ever saw."

"You ought to get some American machinery. I believe that there is a machine made which crushes out practically all of the juice."

"I get all that I can handle now," said Paris. "I always lose a good part of my crop each year, because I can't get through with the boiling process in the short season before the cane rots on my hands."

"There are several ways in which that could be remedied. You have, I noticed, only oil lamps, so that it is impossible to work at night."

"What would you suggest—electricity?" asked Paris, humorously.

"Yes; why not? You have power enough in that river there to run a dynamo, which would light your whole hacienda and run the cars down to your dock. That would be much better than pushing them along by hand, as you do now. I think that if you were to put in modern machinery and electricity you could more than double your output each year, besides getting along with fewer hands."

"The cost of labor is so little that it is hardly worth considering," said Paris; "but the use of new machinery certainly is. I value this hacienda at three hundred thousand dollars, and I make about fifty thousand a year on it."

Everton expressed his astonishment at this. If a man like Paris, with his antiquated machinery and equally antiquated methods, could get such a return from his hacienda, he wondered what an enterpris-

ing American could do. Of late he had received several letters from Marshall Everton, in which the old man had spoken of the changes in their family fortunes and the advisability of the son's seeking some remunerative employment as soon as he was discharged from the army. His enlistment had expired, and the young man was in a position where it seemed urgently advisable for him to turn his attention to his financial position and do something to remedy it. He had lived all his life in the anticipation, and indeed the actual enjoyment, of affluence, and he now found himself face to face with the very serious problem of earning his daily bread. The future had no terrors for him, however. His experience as a soldier had taught him the difference between the necessities of life and its superfluities, and in learning this he had mastered one of its most valuable lessons.

While Everton was thinking of the opportunities which he saw about him for making a fortune in sugar, and wondering how he personally could make use of them, Paris regarded him thoughtfully. He reflected how much more interest he would take in the work if he had a son to help him and step into his place some day when the life work was done.

"I am going into town in the morning," said

Everton, after a few moments, "and I expect to receive my discharge from the army. My time was up six weeks ago, and the other men who enlisted when I did have all been discharged, or re-enlisted, before this."

"You will not remain in the army?" asked Paris, somewhat anxiously.

"Oh, no. I enlisted for the war and was in Cuba. The trouble seems about over out here, and I have my way to make in the world."

"I want you to stay with me for the present," Paris said. "I cannot spare you. You have been of great service to me. Perhaps I may have a proposition to submit to you."

"You are very kind, and I shall be happy to stay. While we are on the subject, I noticed that when your cane juice has been crushed out it runs into big vats and is boiled."

"Yes; what about it?"

"Simply this. When those vats are full, instead of letting your men stop work and go to sleep until the juice is cooled, why don't you have other vats made and ladle the sugar into them? You could then go right ahead and crush more cane, instead of losing five or six hours each day."

The simplicity of this arrangement appealed to

Paris at once. "I will have it done," he said. "I wonder that I never thought of that myself."

They continued to talk about the introduction of new machinery until the appearance of a muchacho bearing a tray. It was time for the afternoon meal, which in the Philippines breaks the long fast from luncheon at twelve until dinner at half-past eight or nine. Señora Paris and Mercedes soon came out and joined them.

Everton had become very much at home in this household during the weeks he had spent in getting back his strength. He had shown to Señora Paris many little courtesies, such as American men are apt to show to older women, and these unaccustomed attentions had made for him a warm friend.

Of the daughter he had seen far more than men usually see of unmarried girls in the Philippines. His being a guest in the house, and ill, had thrown him into intimate contact with all the members, and Mercedes had read aloud to him from "Don Quixote" and other works of Spanish fiction.

"Our friend informs me that he leaves the army to-morrow," said Señor Paris, filling his mouth full of bread and jam.

Whether he ever put in American machinery or not, Everton felt quite sure that Paris would

stick to his Filipino table-manners to the end of time.

"I hope you do not leave us then," said his wife, courteously.

"No; your husband has very kindly asked me to remain here for the present."

"Asked you? I insist upon it," exclaimed Paris, gulping down his chocolate with a loud noise. "I could not get along without you."

"You are very kind," said Everton; "but I fear you exaggerate."

"I am sure he does not," said Mercedes. "Are you going home to America?"

"I have made no plans as yet," he answered, hesitating. A wave of sadness swept over him at the thought that the word "home" did not have the same significance for him that it had had during his mother's lifetime. A home can only be made by a mother or a wife.

"I am a soldier, and can make my home wherever I can find enough ground to spread my blanket," he said.

"We have ground enough for that here," rejoined Paris, graciously. "About ten thousand acres."

"Perhaps he has a sweetheart in America," said Señora Paris, dipping a piece of bread into her

chocolate and raising it to her lips. Everton looked at her, amused. Two years before, the table-manners of these people would have jarred upon him; but now, after his experience in the ranks, where table-manners are not especially cultivated, he scarcely noticed them.

"No," he answered. "I am alone in the world, except for my father."

"Pobrecito!" exclaimed Señora Paris, sympathetically. She had large brown eyes of the kind which grow moist on the least possible provocation.

When they had finished, Everton suggested a stroll down the road leading to the sea. Mercedes shyly acquiesced.

"I wish I had a son like that," said Paris, when he and his wife were alone together.

"Sons are sent by God," explained his spouse, religiously. "You might have had one like José Mispall," she added, with some spirit.

Señor Isidro shrugged his shoulders by way of comment. "I need help here on this place. I have learned to lean on this young man."

"Pay him a salary, then, to stay with you. You can afford it."

"Yes, but—I believe him to be one of the young men who work for themselves and not on salaries.

Do you remember, Carissima," he continued after a pause, "how I gave up my salary the first year we were married and went to work for myself on the hacienda Carlotta?"

"I do not forget," replied his wife with a sigh. "Then it was always 'our future'; now it is the future of Mercedes."

"We molded our future," replied Señor Paris, gently. "Mercedes cannot mold hers. She must marry, and the pick of her suitors seems to be José Mispall. I sometimes wonder if all the young people are like that in these days."

Señora Paris made no reply, and he looked down the road to where Everton and Mercedes were walking. At that moment the American put forth his hand to help his companion across a rough spot in the road. As Señor Isidro looked at them, his thoughts took a strange drift.

"Why not?" he muttered to himself. "Why not?"

Chapter IX

SEÑOR ISIDRO GIVES A BALL

THE following day Everton was discharged from the army, and as time passed he became, by degrees, the controlling hand in the management of the Paris hacienda. While he had never before had any practical experience in the running of sugar plantations, he was possessed of a good fund of that quality which goes by the name of common sense, and which is probably derived, by evolution, from the experience of former generations.

He took a great interest in the work, and it was of a character to appeal to him. After the restrictions of his soldier existence, it was delightful to be his own master once more, and his duties as general manager gave him plenty of out-of-door work riding about the hacienda and giving a personal supervision to many things which had previously been allowed to take care of themselves. Señor Isidro had been suffering for some time from an attack of rheumatism, and was quite content to be confined to

the house, where he could spend his time reading "Don Quixote" and other Spanish novels with which the house was stocked, and still know that his business was in competent hands. He grew daily more and more attached to Everton, who, feeling keenly the obligation placed upon him by their kindness during his long illness, did his best to make up for it, in a measure, by his courtesy to the different members of the household.

He talked much of America, for in everything connected with that country Señor Isidro showed the keenest interest. It was the interest which an old man takes when, near the close of his life's journey, he looks about him and sees the changes which are coming in with the new generation. He was sincerely attached to his country, but the strong mixture of white blood in his veins gave him a far more liberal mind than most of his countrymen. He was a Filipino in his devotion to the Philippines, but a Spaniard in his half-concealed contempt for the Malay character.

He was far-sighted enough to see that American sovereignty in the islands was the very thing needed to develop both the country and the race, and he was near enough to the end of his journey to be able to view political questions from an unbiased standpoint.

Sympathy with the wrongs and injustice to which the race had been subjected, he had always had. Indeed, he had gone so far as to take part in the revolution of 1844—if that somewhat spectacular affair can be dignified by the name of revolution. But he was far from being in sympathy with the fiery and impracticable patriotism of the others, which showed itself in bombastic speech-making and other heroics. He knew that such men as the patriot Risal were the exceptions from which one might infer the future possibilities of the race, not the standards by which that race could be judged in the present. He had once expressed his views tersely to Everton, by saying that such of the people as did not deserve to be hanged certainly deserved to be free; but freedom and self-government were not synonymous, as he understood the native character.

Now, while Señor Isidro took a broad, general interest in the political future of his country, he took a much stronger, personal one in the future of his own little family.

He had no son. Just what a disappointment this had been to him it is difficult for any one to realize who does not belong to a semi-civilized community and feel a half-savage pride in male offspring. His family consisted of his wife, Mercedes, and his

brother Bartholomew; but with the latter his relations had of late been somewhat strained. The question which had so often presented itself to him was what his little family would do when he was gone. Above all things on earth he loved his daughter, and that which concerned her future concerned him more nearly than anything else. And that which most concerns the future of any girl is her marriage.

He recognized the fact that she had now arrived at an age when it was his duty to give the subject serious consideration and select for her a suitable husband. In regard to this selection he was placed in a very difficult position, on account of his mixed blood. He was, himself, more than half white, and so was his wife, while the little Mercedes was so Spanish in type that only her dress proclaimed the *mestiza.* He disliked the idea of marrying her to a Filipino for many reasons, the strongest of which were business ones.

He was a rich man, but his wealth was not invested in stocks and bonds which could be left to themselves while he drew regular dividends. It was in sugar lands which, properly managed, would return a handsome profit, but which would otherwise soon cease to pay expenses. He had good reason to believe that

in the hands of an incompetent son-in-law his property would be mismanaged. Most of the young caballeros who had suggested themselves as possible candidates for Mercedes' hand were men of the type of José Mispall—more addicted to cards than to work.

But now fortune had thrown in his way a young man who seemed to be in every way the right man in the right place. In Everton he had chanced upon a young, honest specimen of that great people who had come so lately into control of the land. He was far-sighted enough to see that his indolent, easy-going countrymen could not hope to resist, commercially, this new force. It was the progress and science of the twentieth century, supported by a rugged, northern temperament. He could not help but foresee that the wealth of his own beautiful island, and that of the others, would ultimately come into the possession of this new race.

The time had come when he must step into line with the new order of things. If he did, there was practically no limit to the power and prestige which his family might enjoy in the next generation; if he did not, they, in common with the others, must eventually go to the wall. He needed American methods—skill, honesty, and enterprise;—above all,

he needed the assistance of some capable young American who possessed these qualities and who would, at the same time, regard the interests of the Paris family as his own.

Now, Isidro Paris was possessed of a considerable knowledge of the world—which is to say, that he had observed carefully many men, and had discovered that, after all, each was very like the others; in that with each self-interest was the great, if not the only, interest. He was sufficiently just to deem this but natural, having studied himself as well as his fellows. He thought, therefore, that he might buy American machinery and hire an American manager and still not be able to go to his rest secure in the knowledge that his family's interests would be conserved. If Everton, who was the man he needed, was to be bound to the interests of Mercedes, who was the one he considered, their interests must be made identical, and there was but one way to accomplish that—he must marry her.

The scheme appealed to the old man in every way. He had grown personally attached to Everton, and the thought that he might have his companionship during the closing years of his life was very pleasing to him. The question did not seem to be open to argument. The more he observed

Everton, the more he became fixed in the belief that the young American was all that could be desired in a son-in-law. There was, too, another argument which had great weight with him. Mercedes was so nearly white that he shrank from the thought of her marriage with any but a white man. Under the new régime, a white man meant an American, just as it had formerly meant a Spaniard, and Everton had clearly been sent by Providence, just at the right time.

It was the evening of the ball in honor of Mercedes' eighteenth birthday. Everton had ridden away at dawn, to spend the day in Silay, and now returned at seven o'clock to find that a transformation had been wrought in the house during his absence.

He had never given the Filipinos, as a race, credit for anything approaching artistic taste. More than once the contrast between the beauty of everything natural and the Spanish crudeness of everything artificial in the land had impressed itself painfully upon him. But now, as he paused at the head of the grand stairway and marveled at the way in which nature had been invited indoors, he was forced to admit that he had done these people an injustice.

Had it not been for the highly polished floor of dark, hard wood, he could easily have believed that he stood in the palm grove by the sea. A hundred of the stately trees had been ravished of their long, graceful branches, with which the walls and ceilings were banked. The doorways and windows had been converted into arches whose sides were dwarf palms, their branches blending together at the top and concealing the woodwork with a clever counterfeit of nature. A soft light was furnished by oil lamps hidden away behind the foliage and by innumerable Japanese lanterns, concealed in the same way.

There was no one visible about the hall or verandas when Everton arrived and went to his own room to dress. He was in high spirits, having driven a sharp bargain with some merchants in Iloilo for the sale of the season's sugar crop. He was to go over to Iloilo the next morning, and looked forward to the trip with a boyish pleasure. The easy freedom of the life he was now leading was in strong and agreeable contrast to the restrictions of his life in the ranks.

It was not long after the hurried dinner before the guests began to arrive, and by ten o'clock the double rows of chairs about the walls of the hallway were filled with the dusky beauties of the coast.

There was Señor Pedrera of Talisay, a Spaniard whose life-long residence in the Philippines had given him a darker skin than those of his three *mestiza* daughters—the acknowledged belles of their town. There were a half-dozen army officers in their immaculate white duck uniforms, and among them Taylor and the second lieutenant. The latter had arrived in Silay two hours before from a trip to the north, and hearing of the ball had mounted a fresh horse and pushed on. There was a major from Iloilo and a regular army doctor from Bacolod. These two retired to the balcony early in the evening, and became so steeped in Scotch whisky and reminiscences of the Civil War as to be unavailable for partners. The doctor managed to pull himself together at supper time, leaving the major asleep in his chair and snoring assiduously.

There were others, too numerous to mention, for the visiting list of the Paris family was a large one, and included nearly every hacendero from Silay to Bago. Not a few had traveled all day in their little *quilises*, that they might be present on this great occasion and enjoy the regal hospitality of the wealthy planter.

A decided constraint and formality marked the beginning of the evening's festivities. The matrons

occupied the second row of seats, with their backs against the wall of verdure, giving up the front row to the younger girls. The night was warm, and they all fanned themselves vigorously, which caused the heavy air to take up the perfumes from their comely persons and spread them abroad. Many and various were these perfumes, but chief among them all was the heavy, determined odor of cocoanut oil which arose from the glossy, black heads and seemed to challenge all comers for the exclusive possession of the air.

Until the dancing began the men adjourned to the dining-room to drink and smoke, leaving the women to their own devices. Either a shyness on the part of the latter or else a social barrier of long custom, divided the sexes until later in the evening.

The ball opened with a *rigadon*—a characteristic dance of the islands—in which every one took part. This was followed by a waltz, which latter was, in turn, succeeded by a polka—much to the disgust of the second lieutenant.

"How do you dance the blame thing, anyway?" he inquired of Taylor, who was standing in one of the long windows, lazily watching the others get overheated.

"Try a two-step."

"Do you mean to tell me that their polka is nothing but our two-step? I thought it was a kind of an obsolete, one-two-three-and-a-jump concern."

Taylor laughed. "It is a two-step. What we know as the polka they never seem to have heard of out here."

"I thought the two-step was as much an American institution as apple pie or the word 'guess.'"

"I can't say as to the pie, but you'll find 'guess' in Shakespeare. Come and have a glass of champagne."

"No, thanks. I'm going to have a try at the native two-step. Watch me capture the belle of the ball." As he finished speaking he darted across the room to Mercedes, who was standing with flushed face and sparkling eyes by the side of her father. She was looking extremely well, and foreign enough to be decidedly out of place among the dusky señoritas of the neighborhood. Several of the army officers, who saw her for the first time that evening, found it difficult to believe that she was, indeed, a *mestiza* and the daughter of their dark-skinned host.

Taylor's were not the only eyes which followed her with an admiring gaze as she glided off in the arms of the second lieutenant. It was, as Paris had said, but as yesterday that she had been a child to

the young gallants of Silay and Bacolod, and more than one masculine heart was stirred as its owner saw, for the first time, how the dainty little creature had matured and ripened into womanhood.

The ball progressed very much after the manner of such functions the world over. It was after the first supper—no less than three heavy repasts were served during the evening—that José Mispall, having obtained the honor of two successive dances with Mercedes, persuaded her to sit them out with him in a sequestered nook on the veranda. That he persuaded her more easily than he had expected to do, was due to the fact that she was piqued at what she chose to consider Everton's neglect, for, altho the American had danced with her several times, he had done so with an air of abstraction, from which she could not help but infer that his thoughts were elsewhere—as indeed they were.

She had grown to like Everton immensely, and the real indifference, which she believed she saw beneath his kindly, considerate manner, hurt her. She was too simple to be in any way conscious of the racial barrier which separated them; her knowledge of the world being limited to the world of Negros and Manila, and therein the mixture of blood was no discredit. Both of her grandfathers having been

Spaniards, it did not occur to her that Everton could regard her as being in any way inferior because of the darker strain of blood which ran through her veins. Indeed, she had been encouraged by her over-indulgent parents to regard herself as quite an important and altogether charming personage, and she had now reached the age when she felt that she was entitled to a little of the gallantry from men of which she had read so much in books.

Being actuated by these feelings, she accepted Mispall's unconventional invitation in the hope that Everton would see them and awake to a sense of the opportunity he had wasted. Everton did not see them, but some one else did, with a result which changed many things by precipitating an event which otherwise might never have come to pass.

Señor Paris chanced to be returning from a hurried visit to his kitchen soon after the pair had ensconsed themselves upon the divan, and Mispall had begun to turn the conversation into personal channels—something at which he was an adept. The old man stopped abruptly as he caught sight of them, and stood watching for some time, startled not a little at the spectacle of his daughter enjoying a tête-à-tête with a man, and a man of whom he thought as little as he did of Mispall. Then, just as José, who

believed in the rapid form of love making, was leaning forward and attempting to possess himself of one of Mercedes' hands, he came forward and spoke quietly.

"My child," he said, "you will find your mother in the hall. I think that you had better join her there. You are heated from the dancing, and you might catch cold out here."

She was too unsophisticated to draw any inference from his words or tone, and such a thing as questioning his request never occurred to her. So, with a shy blush, she arose and preceded them down the veranda.

Mispall made a self-conscious observation about having availed himself of his old friendship for the family to chat with one of its most charming members—a remark which fell rather flat upon Paris. As they started to follow the girl to the ballroom, the old man walked at a snail's pace until she had disappeared within the house, and then said casually, but with a meaning which the other could not fail to perceive: "We must not be selfish, José. Youth is the time for enjoyment, and the young like best those of their own age. Come and have a glass of wine with me."

There was nothing to be done but to accept the

situation, which Mispall did with as good a grace as possible, altho he resented being placed in the same generation with Mercedes' father, being himself twenty years younger than Señor Isidro. He accompanied his host to the dining-room, and, having lost his interest in the dancing, remained there for the greater part of the night.

Paris returned to the ballroom, where he looked about him from time to time with happiness and pride. He was, he reflected, a very lucky man to have such a house and such a daughter. This was certainly the finest ball which had ever been given on the island of Negros, and (he rubbed his hands gleefully together at the thought) there had been few to equal it in Manila in the days of the old grandees. Life had indeed prospered with him, to be the head of such an establishment as this and to have the influence and prestige which were his. Then the thought of his future plans occurred to him, and he recalled uncomfortably the scene he had witnessed on the veranda but a few minutes before. He began to think that if he lost any more time a new element might have to be taken into consideration—Mercedes might fall in love.

He was happy to have observed that she had played only a passive part in the little scene which

he had so heartlessly interrupted, but playing even passive parts under such circumstances is a dangerous occupation; especially in a land where, before marriage, women play passive parts in most things. Certainly there was no time to be lost. He would find an opportunity of speaking to Everton that very night after the guests had gone.

It was near sunrise before the last of the guests took their departure and rattled off down the driveway as fast as their bulls could draw them. The night had been oppressively warm, but now there crept into the air a freshness which was almost sharp, and which was fragrant with the odor of the earth and foliage. Suddenly the stately game roosters, which strutted about the house by day, awoke and began to crow. They continued the shrill noise for a few minutes, and then, realizing that it was, after all, not yet daylight, they desisted and went to sleep once more.

"Come out here for a while," said Paris, when the last guest had left and the women of the household had bidden them good-night and gone to their own apartments. "I have something of importance to say to you; that is, unless you are tired?"

"Not in the least," replied Everton, as he followed

his host to a corner of the veranda overlooking Canaloan, which was just looming up behind a filmy veil of mist. In his life as a soldier he had learned to love this hour of dawn, after the long, hot nights and before the long, hot days. As he looked at the distant hills he thought of the contrast between the night he had just passed and the many through which he had lain out on that mountain-side in the rain and mud. Then he thought of the innumerable little acts of kindness which Paris had shown to him during the past months, and his heart warmed toward the old man, who, taking one of the cane chairs and motioning Everton to another, began to speak.

First he spoke of his hacienda, its wealth and possibilities, and referred to the years of toil he had put into the business, showing how, from a small beginning, he had developed the immense enterprise with which Everton was now familiar.

"And what I have done," he went on, "is as nothing compared to what may yet be done. To a young man like yourself the situation offers remarkable possibilities. But the work must be first with you, if you are to make the great success. I have seen men of the European races come out here before. They stay ten or fifteen years and make enough out of the country to live on; then they go

back home again. That is not the way to make a great fortune. That is something which requires the reinvesting of your capital in the same enterprises in which you have made it—developing the work with which you are familiar and with which you have succeeded. To make a great fortune here, you must have your heart in this country, and this work. If you are to be forever thinking of home you will never accomplish anything great. And now I must ask you a personal question. Is there any woman in your case—any one to whom you would be forever anxious to return?"

Everton did not reply immediately. He was thinking of Constance Fairchild and wondering just how to answer this remarkable question; wondering, too, why the old man asked it. He thought that he could safely say that he would not be always wanting to return. She had told him in no uncertain terms that she could not marry him, because she did not care for him. That had been two years ago, and he had not seen her since or heard from her but once. He had failed in the great desire of his life, and that was the end of it.

"You mean, I presume, to ask whether I am engaged to be married?"

"Yes," replied Paris, who had grown anxious dur-

ing the long silence; "that's exactly what I mean. Are you, or do you expect to be, engaged to be married?"

"No," replied Everton, slowly. "I am not engaged, and I have no expectation of being. You do not ask me——"

"Whether you have ever fancied a woman? No, I do not. I am not such a fool," continued Señor Isidro, hastily. "You and I are talking of business and the serious affairs of life."

He then, without further preliminary, proceeded to offer Everton a half interest in his hacienda and the hand of his daughter Mercedes.

To say that the young man was amazed would be to give but a faint idea of his feelings as he listened to this astounding proposition, and for the moment he was inclined to the opinion that the old man had gone suddenly across the border line which divides old age from second childhood. He had expected to be offered the post of manager, with perhaps the hint at a future interest for himself; but that he should be offered, at the outset, an interest equal to that of the present owner was something of which he had never dreamed. Unfortunately there was a condition attached to the offer which made its acceptance impossible.

"You are too kind," he said slowly, more embarrassed than he had ever been before, "but I do not—" He hesitated, searching for words with which to reject the proposal without hurting the old man's pride. "That is, I had not thought of marriage."

"Naturally not," replied Paris. "And I do not expect or desire that you should decide at once. I have thought for a long time about this, and it is but natural that you should think, too, before deciding. My daughter will make you a good wife, as her mother has made me one. A man is never contented or in a position to do the best work until he has married and settled down. In such a life as this you would need the relaxations of marriage. Now, if you marry, it is of the greatest importance that you should marry a girl to whom this would be home and who would not be continually wishing to go back to Europe or America. If you married one of your own countrywomen, she would not, probably, be willing to live in the Philippines."

Everton fell silent again, for he could find no words with which to speak. His Spanish seemed to have deserted him, and the three words "Yo no quiero" were all that came to his mind. He wanted to impress upon Paris the fact that, in his opinion,

marriage and business were separate departments of life. Of course he could not tell him that when he did marry it was more important that the woman should be white than that she should be acclimated to the Philippines.

"It is a serious question," said Paris, "and one which, of course, concerns your whole life. A man who decides in an hour, before breakfast, a matter involving all the future years of his life is a fool; and I do not want a fool for a son-in-law. Take time to think it over."

"You must see, Señor, how extraordinary your offer is," replied Everton, slowly. "I feel very grateful for the honor you have done me—but——"

"But you are not in love with Mercedes—is that it?"

"Yes," admitted the other, reluctantly. "And she is not in love with me," he added, meaning to soften the effect of the ungallant monosyllable.

Paris laughed, and turning, placed a hand on each of the younger man's shoulders. "I like you," he said. "You are an honest man, and the kind of a gentleman one does not meet too often. It often happens in this world that two men need each other. You and I are in that position now. I need you, and you need me; I expect to profit by this, and so

shall you—but don't expect an old man like me to talk of love at five o'clock in the morning."

"I don't want to talk about love," replied the American, smiling. "If there was any love in the case it would be different, but—I don't see what you have to gain by this. Why do you need me? I have no capital, no experience, nothing that you need."

"You have honesty and a good heart, and I like you," replied Paris. "And when you come to my time of life, and have daughters of your own, you will realize that there are things which a man values more in a son-in-law than capital. Now, oblige me by dropping the subject for the present. There is no hurry."

"But——"

"Is it too much to ask, that you give it a week's consideration?" exclaimed Señor Isidro, with just a touch of impatience in his voice.

It was not, certainly; and Everton felt that he had been a trifle ungracious. Under the circumstances, an immediate answer was not obligatory, and he could at his leisure, think of words in which to frame his refusal.

"I will do so," he replied, hastily; "and in the meantime I assure you that I appreciate the honor you have paid me."

"Then let us leave the matter there," said Paris. He reflected that when Everton had given a week's consideration to the project he would favor it, and he liked him none the less for not hastening to clinch the bargain.

"Are you off for Iloilo?" he added.

"Yes; I will start as soon as the *lorcha* is ready."

"At your convenience. The boat is ready now. I gave the order last night."

"Then I will start as soon as I have changed my clothes," said Everton, briskly. "Good-night, or, rather, good-morning."

He hurried to his room and quickly put off his clothes, after which he had a cool sponge and donned a fresh suit of white linen. In ten minutes he was ready for the trip. He felt as refreshed by his bath as though he had slept all night, instead of spending it between the supper table and the ballroom. It is a remarkable thing, this youth, which enables a man to start the day after a sleepless night with a greater vigor than that of a man of fifty, who has slept eight hours. He opened his door and stepped out into the hall. Upon the big, round table was a steaming coffee-pot, and by it stood Señor Isidro.

"Coffee is better than wine to begin the day with,"

he said, with a smile. "You will be in Iloilo for breakfast at nine o'clock, if this wind holds."

The old man's unfailing thoughtfulness in little things touched Everton. The remarkable offer which Paris had made to him a few minutes before had astonished him; but even that was not as remarkable, had he but known it, as the kindness which the family had shown him from the beginning. In wanting to marry him to Mercedes, Paris had, as we have seen, been actuated by motives of what he considered his own best interest, but the care and attention which he and his had shown to a sick and wounded soldier, of an alien race, had been prompted by no selfish motives.

The gray of dawn was in the room as the two men drank their coffee, and this young man recalled that other morning, when he had entered this room, for the first time, in the arms of Sergeant Cassidy, who was crying over him like any woman. A great realizing sense of what he owed to Paris came to him, and as he turned to go he held out his hand, saying:

"Señor Isidro, I am fully conscious of your great and unusual kindness to me. Some day I hope to repay you."

"It is nothing, my son. I like you, and old

men take fancies, sometimes, as well as young girls. Buen viaje!"

"Adiós!" said Everton, running lightly down the stairs, and mounting the horse which was to carry him to the dock, off which there was just light enough for him to discern the dim outline of the *lorcha* making sail.

Chapter X

THE MACTAVISH BUNGALOW

ILOILO lay scorching beneath the fierce rays of the sun—or rather what was left of Iloilo after the insurgent exodus. The few houses which had remained standing when the retreating force had fired the town threw back the blazing, heated light from their corrugated iron roofs; the white highways caught it, absorbed a part, and hurled the rest in the face of the pedestrian. The dust, which lay thick upon those white roads, was caught up by each lumbering *caribao* cart or army ambulance and raised in a thick cloud, which hung suspended in the dead, stifling atmosphere for many moments after the disturbing element was past. Block after block of ruined, blackened walls aided the streets in their melancholy task of indicating the original outline of the town.

The Chinese—those thrifty money-seekers who are so often to be found restoring the arts of peace after the ravages of war—had moved into the ruins, estab-

lishing their shops for the sale of general merchandise under temporary roofs and within the blackened walls.

It was a day when natives, who had been born and raised under that fierce, tropical sun, would slink along the street, keeping carefully within the shade of the ruined walls, while American soldiers, just out from home, exposed themselves recklessly in the Plaza—"out shopping for experience," as Everton tersely expressed it.

An American army mule, his long ears drooping from the heat, stood in the middle of the street which runs along the river front. It was such heat as sometimes, within a few hours, drives men mad from thirst; such heat as Everton had not experienced in all the months he had spent on Negros. It seemed to him that by crossing the narrow Straits that morning he had come into a different zone.

The little veranda overhanging Calle Real was the only place which seemed to offer any shelter or coolness, and it belonged to the one dwelling-house on the street, the other buildings being offices, warehouses, and "godowns." It chanced that when the flames had swept over Iloilo they had overlooked that portion of the town which extended from the Captain of the Port's office to the Plaza. A score of

offices and dwellings, a bank, and the church were left to show that the town had been only commonplace, as Spanish towns in the tropics usually are.

It was two o'clock, and the hour of the siesta. Four men occupied the little veranda—four men who had gathered there from four distant corners of the earth. All were in a state of negligee bordering on the undressed, and they had tiffined as well as was possible in Iloilo in those days.

There was MacTavish: small, Scotch, and kindly, with a slow speech and a quick eye. Johnson: yellow, bilious, and resigned. He had come East for an English firm eight years before, and never spoke of "home" as the others did. Said he meant to die out there, and drank enough whisky to indicate that he meant what he said. There was also an American officer named O'Connor, a thin, muscular specimen of the army man, who could never by any chance be taken for anything but a soldier. His idea of a military life was fighting, and he had in his heart a strong, half-concealed contempt for all men who had never been soldiers. Everton made the fourth, and he lay at length in a cane chair, lazily puffing at his perfecto cigar and watching the noisy efforts of some native boatmen, who were poling their *parao* slowly up stream.

MacTavish was the merchant who had purchased the season's output of sugar from the Paris hacienda, and, business concluded, he had insisted on Everton's remaining to tiffin. The Scotchman had spent most of his life in the East, and it never occurred to him that business could be carried on without the aid of whisky-and-sodas, tiffin and cigars. Everton had been only too glad to accept the invitation, for after the work of the morning he was beginning to realize that he had passed a sleepless night, and a pleasant drowsiness was stealing over him.

There was a very faint breeze down at the river's mouth, a few hundred yards away, but it was not strong enough to reach the little veranda, on which the thermometer registered one hundred and five degrees.

"I wonder," said MacTavish, as he removed his collar and threw it unceremoniously onto the floor, "why Gawd made this place?"

"For the same reason he made some men fools enough to come and live here, I suppose," replied Johnson.

"Drink less whisky and take more exercise," suggested O'Connor; "then you won't feel the heat. Look at me."

"Ay, look at him," said MacTavish. "He looks

like my monkey did last rains, when I'd left him out in the compound over night. He was near drowned by morning."

The perspiration had soaked through O'Connor's khaki blouse in a big, dark blotch. "All right," he said, "look at me. I may be sweaty, but I am the most contented man in the outfit at that. You civilians live too high. Wait till you've marched through a few days like this, with no water and no shade, and you'll have something to complain about. Then you'll learn how to appreciate iced drinks and long chairs."

"Which is another way of putting that old woman's philosophy about there being nothing so bad but that you can find something worse, if you go out and hunt for it," retorted MacTavish.

"Why do you live here if you don't like it?" continued O'Connor.

"Not for fun, I assure you. Why are you here yourself, may I ask?"

"Because I'm stationed here."

"So am I. I've a commanding officer by the name of Necessity. If I had money, I'd clear out fast enough."

"Shut up!" said Johnson. "You're too old a stager to be complaining, MacTavish."

"I've wished myself dead more than once the last year, notwithstanding," said the Scotchman.

"Take some calomel," suggested the other.

The conversation lagged, for there is nothing, with the exception of horse-racing and women, which will make men in the East prolong any discussion when the temperature mounts above a hundred degrees. During the long silence, MacTavish dropped off to sleep. His cigar fell from his thick lips, hung for a second in his gray beard, to the great menace of that appendage, and then landed on his shirt. Johnson called Everton's attention to it.

"Do you see that?" he asked. "Well, he does that every day, and has ever since we've lived here." He picked up the smoldering stub and tossed it into the street. "Some day I won't be here, and then he'll burn up. Silly ass!"

"Who's that?" inquired MacTavish, awakening as suddenly as he had fallen asleep.

"Referring to you," said his friend, shortly, relighting his own cigar, which had gone out. "If it wasn't for me, you'd have no shirts left. You've tried to set yourself on fire again."

"I'm obliged to you," said MacTavish, with dignity.

As he spoke, one of the windows in the adjoining

house was pushed slowly open, and a very much bedraggled and frowzy head was thrust forth. It was followed by a pair of shoulders incased in a soiled Mother Hubbard wrapper, beneath which there was a form from which all feminine comeliness had long since departed. It was an old Spanish woman, who seemed to regard herself as so much superior to the natives around her that she did not trouble to keep clean or tidy—reflecting, no doubt, that, there being no one but the aforesaid natives to see her, the effort was not justified by her surroundings. A tired smile illumined her fat face when she saw MacTavish, and she bowed slightly. Then she shouted something in a shrill voice to a little *mestiza* child, who was playing, half naked, in the street below, and drew in her head.

"Who's your friend?" asked O'Connor.

"It's the Señora Carmen, who owns this house," answered MacTavish. "Have to keep on good terms with her. If I didn't, there would be nothing left in the house."

"How is that?" inquired O'Connor.

"It's the Castilian way of doing business. We rented the house furnished three years ago. And it was furnished—when we moved in. She came over the next morning and borrowed three chairs

from the dining-room. A few days afterwards, when we were out, she came back and borrowed the sideboard without asking permission. I sent word to her that she'd better have the table and make the set complete. I thought she'd appreciate the fine sarcasm of it, so I sent Pedro with the message. He came back in five minutes with two other servants, and away went the table. The laugh was on me that time. Since then she has borrowed most of the furniture that was in the house when we came, and a good bit of what we've bought. None of the things are ever returned. And besides all that, she's raised the rent."

"I don't see," said O'Connor, who had an Irishman's eye for pretty women, "why Señor Carmen went to the trouble and expense of importing that lady from Spain. I should rather have had a native."

"She was a widow, up to two months ago," answered MacTavish, "and has an interesting history. She was married in September to a young man in Manila, by proxy."

"By proxy?" inquired Everton, puzzled.

"Yes; she down here, and he up there. She made a big time of it—you know she's very rich—and had a ball after the ceremony. Lloyd, who is

in the cable office, was best man, and there being no groom to sober up for the ceremony, he got full himself the night before, and didn't show up till the church part was over. The Señora sent up a lot of money to bring the young bridegroom—he is twenty-five and she is sixty—down from Manila. That was two months ago, and he hasn't shown up yet."

"What you might call a gold brick investment," said O'Connor, putting his feet upon the railing and loosening his blouse. "I suppose he is off taking a honeymoon by himself in Hongkong."

"I don't wonder that she looks blue, under the circumstances," said Everton. "Do you have many marriages like that out here?"

"No; not many. There are only a few Spanish women. Never were many outside of Manila. Most of the Spaniards married natives."

"Judging by the Spanish women I have seen out here, I would rather marry a native, myself, than one of them," yawned O'Connor.

"Right you are," said MacTavish. "If a man has to live out here, he might do worse than marry a native. I know several fellows who have."

"How did the marriages turn out?" inquired Everton.

"They seem to have turned out as well as the average marriages do at home."

"I should think," said O'Connor, "that some of these girls ought to make pretty good wives."

"They live altogether for their husbands," said Johnson, "have a child every year for twenty years, and then die. That ought to be devotion enough for any man."

"I don't suppose there could be any companionship with one of them," Everton continued.

"If it's companionship you're after," retorted MacTavish, "you had better go and live in a club. Women are the same the world over. Once they get married, children and housekeeping are all they care about. The most you can hope for is a good temper, and your Filipina has that. The white man who marries one of them gets a devoted wife and is the head of his own house, and don't you forget it. That's more than can be said for some married men at home."

"You know a lot about it—you do!" sneered Johnson, mixing himself another whisky-and-soda. In the years that were gone Johnson had loved a woman. It was only a memory with him now, but it is not a bad thing to have such memories, and to his was due the fact that Johnson was not in some

ways worse than he was—which was not saying a great deal, after all. The memory was accompanied by a great respect for women, as such, and in the arguments with MacTavish, in which the opposite sex formed so frequent a subject for discussion, he usually found it incumbent on him to defend the sex in general, for the sake of that memory.

"A man could doubtless be very happy with a Filipino girl, if he understood her," he said.

"Hear the man talk!" said MacTavish. "Was there ever a man that understood a woman?"

"I dare say," replied Everton; "but she doesn't always happen to marry that particular one."

"Well," said O'Connor, "I wouldn't mind tying up to a native, if I could find one with a big, rich hacienda and half-a-dozen town houses like the one next door."

"If the by-proxy bridegroom doesn't show up, you might try your luck with the Señora Carmen. She ought to be in just the mood to marry again, out of pique," suggested MacTavish.

"Did you ever meet a native woman who could talk—keep her end up, so to speak?" inquired Everton.

"Well, rather," replied Johnson. "They are by no means the playthings you might suppose. On

the average, they talk quite as well as our women do at home."

"Oh, come off!" exclaimed MacTavish, becoming more thoroughly awake than he had been at any time since tiffin.

"It's true. You've got to take their surroundings into consideration. They have no life outside of their own little towns, but there's precious little goes on in those towns that they can't talk about as well as the men."

"You mean," said Everton, "that, having no books, theaters, or other resources of the outside world, they are necessarily narrow?"

"I might put it that way if I was writing a book on the subject," admitted Johnson. "However, if they did have all those things they'd make more out of them than your women do. Why, go into any of their houses; you'll find, say, fifty books in the place, and almost every girl in the house has read all of them. Your women may have five thousand, but they don't read any of them."

"What do you mean by our women?" demanded O'Connor. "Do you mean American girls?"

"Yes."

"What do you know about them?"

"I've been in the States—came out that way last

time. I spent two days in New York and two weeks in Chicago."

O'Connor greeted this statement with a derisive laugh, in which Everton joined. "You may not have met all the brightest American women in that time," suggested the latter. "I know several who were not in either city at the time."

"I don't say that I did, of course," persisted Johnson; "though I met some very nice women. But I know one thing, and that is that a Filipino girl, who had had the same advantages those girls had, would have made more out of them."

"Education and advantages be damned!" said O'Connor, positively. "Give me a white skin."

"Oh, if it's beauty you're after," cried MacTavish, "the native women average up a lot better than the whites."

"What's that got to do with it? No man marries what he considers the 'average' woman. She's usually the only one of the kind on earth for him."

"What are you men arguing about, anyway?" asked Everton, looking off toward the Captain of the Port's office and wondering when the mail would be signaled, for there was one due from the United States. "Do you mean that any one of you men would marry a native?"

"MacTavish's the oldest," said Johnson. "Therefore, let him be the first to speak."

"I disclaim the seniority," replied the Scotchman, "but don't mind saying that if I was a marrying man, and had to live out here, I would as lief marry a native as a white woman—provided I liked her."

"Put in a few more conditions," sneered Johnson.

"I wonder if a man could take a native woman back home with him," asked Everton.

"Yes, I suppose so. If there was nothing the matter with her—leprosy or small-pox, for instance," replied O'Connor. "There's nothing in the immigration laws to prevent."

"I mean, would she be received in society?"

"That depends on the society, of course."

"Surely you get my point? Do you believe that now that we have taken possession of these islands we will look upon the inhabitants as social equals, or regard them as we do the negroes at home?"

"I won't, for one," replied O'Connor. "They're not niggers, by a damn sight!"

"If you'll excuse my saying it," interrupted MacTavish, "there's no telling what you won't do with them. You'll go to one extreme or the other. You'll treat them as equals or else as niggers, and they are neither the one nor the other. They are better than

any of the Orientals—except, perhaps, the Japanese—but they're not the equals of white men."

"I guess we'll learn how to manage them fast enough," retorted O'Connor, who was nothing if not patriotic and imbued with the utmost confidence in his own government.

"Shut up," said Johnson. "It's too hot to talk of politics."

"It's never too hot to show a man the error of his ways," replied the Scotchman, "particularly a military man. They're notoriously pig-headed."

Thinking it time to change the subject, Johnson proposed a siesta. "Let's start the punkah and sleep until tea time," he said.

"Is that the way you fellows do business out here?" inquired O'Connor. "Sleep all the afternoon?"

"This is an off day," said MacTavish. "There will be a mail in from Manila to-night, and we shall be busy enough to-morrow. Hello!" he exclaimed a moment later, rising to his feet, and indicating, with a wave of his hairy, brown hand, the signal staff at the Captain of the Port's office: "Talking of the mail boat, there she is now."

The others glanced up in time to see a little black ball creep to the top of the staff and hang there,

swaying in the breeze. It was the time-honored method of announcing to the little town that news had come in from the outside world.

"Let's go over after tea and get our letters," suggested O'Connor.

"What's the hurry—expect one from your girl?" asked MacTavish.

"Possibly."

"Look out, or you'll have my experience."

"What was that?"

"I had a girl, too, when I first came out—more years ago than I like to think of," explained the Scotchman. "It was in the days when the home mails only got down on the average once in two months. My girl forgot to write one mail, and I was all in a sweat by the time the next one was due, not having heard for four months. So, when the mail was signaled, I rushed off to the post-office and stood in line before the delivery window with a lot of natives. All the other fellows thought I was crazy, naturally enough. What I got, at last, was an announcement of her marriage. No letter; just the cold, plain facts. Since then I've never loved. That's the story of my life."

"Half a page of it, you mean; you Lothario, you," said Johnson.

"Speaking of women," said Everton. "Isn't that a white one up there?"

"Where?" inquired O'Connor, becoming of a sudden very wide-awake and interested. "I haven't seen one in a year."

"Well, here's your chance, then. Look at her. She's coming this way."

O'Connor glanced in the direction indicated, and beheld a dilapidated little victoria, drawn by two horses which looked as though they had but recently been captured up in the hills, and harnessed with a harness which was composed chiefly of rope, having been repaired so often that there was nothing but the repaired parts left. The little turnout came down the street from the Plaza at a rapid pace; so rapid as to threaten the ramshackle little outfit with a fate similar to that of the celebrated "One-Horse Shay." As it passed under the veranda on which the four men were sitting, the occupant, a small, thin, tired-looking woman of uncertain age, looked up and bowed wearily to Johnson.

"She's the wife of one of your officers," explained MacTavish, in response to Everton's inquiry, "and was a good-looker when she came here three or four months ago. You wouldn't believe it now, would you?"

"She does look as though she was on her last legs," said O'Connor. "What's the matter?"

"Nothing in particular—that I know of. Just an example of what the climate can do. Hell of a place this!"

"I don't believe she could have been anything remarkable when she came, or she wouldn't have lost all her looks in that time," said Everton.

"Two years in the tropics will make a rag of the most beautiful woman," replied Johnson.

"If a white man can live down here, why not a white woman?"

"Because," said Johnson, who took it upon himself to answer for MacTavish, since that individual had fallen asleep, "they don't drink enough to forget the climate, and have nothing to do but think about it all day. Men have work to do."

"There may be something in that," admitted Everton.

"There certainly is—especially the part about not drinking enough," said Johnson, with a coarse laugh, and reaching forth a trembling hand for the bottle of Dewar's Scotch. "Have some more whisky?"

"No, thanks," replied Everton, unable to suppress a slight feeling of disgust. "I can't drink with you men."

"Something you'd better learn, then," said the other, pouring himself out a four-finger drink and diluting it with soda. "That is, if you mean to live in the East."

Everton made no reply to this observation, and before long the whisky, which was in the nature of a last straw, sent Johnson off to sleep. His head sagged forward onto his chest, and his thin frame seemed to shrivel up like a dead man's. He was not the only one to drop asleep; O'Connor soon followed his example, and MacTavish was already dead to the world, and had been for some moments. Everton was the only one who remained awake, and he lay back in his long chair with half-closed eyes, looking out across the paddy-fields toward the dome of the Jaro church, and dreaming. Whatever the nature of his day-dreams, they were interrupted shortly by a series of chocking sounds, which issued from the great, red throat of MacTavish. The Scotchman was snoring, and his snores were both aggressive and appealing. When one heard them, he did not know whether to play the Samaritan and open the man's collar, or the enemy, and throw something at his bloated face. Between his snores his breath came with a wheezing sound that suggested approaching dissolution.

He was not an attractive sight. Everton glanced from him to the array of empty whisky and soda bottles on the table, and then let his glance fall to the floor, which was littered with burnt matches and cigar stubs.

Suddenly there came over the young man a feeling of disgust that was strong and painful. He found himself wondering with a sort of terror whether he would ever come to be like these men if he settled in the Philippines. If this was what life in the tropics meant, how much better it would be to go home and starve in a cold, vigorous climate than to remain in such a land and amass wealth!

As he was indulging in these and similar reflections, not over-complimentary to his hosts, his eye happened to fall once more on the mail signal. It was cooler now, and it occurred to him to steal away, while the others were sleeping, and go and see if there were any letters for him. Very carefully he arose and tiptoed into the house and down the stairs. Leaving word with the muchacho at the foot of the stairs, who awoke to receive the message and fell asleep again to forget it, that he would be back for dinner, he left the house and strolled slowly up toward the post-office.

When he reached it, he walked up to the little

window and asked for his mail, elbowing his way through the crowd of soldiers who were idling about and waiting for the afternoon drill. After a moment's delay, one letter was handed out. It was in his father's handwriting, and, putting it into his pocket, he turned once more and strolled slowly back toward the river.

Chapter XI

THE PRICE OF A REPUTATION

THERE was a shady little retreat down at the river's edge, not far from where it lost its muddy waters in the deep, salt blue of the harbor, and it was toward this spot that Everton turned his steps, that he might be alone. It was a picturesque place, under the crumbling sides of a building so old that the flames had scarce thought it worth their while to destroy it, in view of the fact that time and neglect were doing the work so thoroughly. Before he reached it the sun had cast a long shadow under its eastern walls, and in this grateful shade he sat down to read his letter.

There are probably no two persons in the world who would receive in exactly the same manner a great sorrow or a great joy. Daniel Everton was one of those men who are led instinctively to combat a calamity first and grieve over it, if need be, afterwards. Almost before he had finished reading, and before sorrow for his father's dishonorable act had

had time to come to him in full force, as it did afterwards, he bent all the energies of his active mind to a consideration of the facts and an attempt to solve the problem of what was best to be done.

He did not allow any feeling of grief to master him, and yet, in all the years of his life, he had known of such bitter reading but once; when he had opened the telegram announcing his mother's death. That was seven years before, and he still recalled at times the anguish of the moment.

He was older now, and his sensibilities were not what they had been then, but the blow he received that afternoon was hard to bear. Dishonor was one of the things in life which it had never occurred to him to prepare for, or to expect. It had come now, however, or would come shortly, unless something could be done to prevent it.

It was not a difficult situation to grasp, and the facts of the case had been set forth with conciseness and precision in his father's letter, so that they were at once understood and absorbed.

The all-important element in the case was, that, unless his father could raise in some magical way, and within the next five months, the very considerable sum of thirty thousand dollars, he would be

forever ruined and disgraced. It seemed to Daniel Everton, bred to consider himself the future inheritor of a handsome fortune, that thirty thousand dollars was a small sum, for the want of which a proud name should be dragged down and an old man's life wrecked; but, to all purposes, it was as bad a deficit as ten times that sum.

The son's heart was full of pity as he thought of the desperate plight of the old man. It did not occur to him to blame. We are all of us governed in our judgments of people to a very large degree by personal prejudice. Marshall Everton had been a good father, and his son was one of the few men fortunate enough to appreciate a good father, before it is too late for their appreciation to do anything except fill their hearts with vain regrets.

As he thought of him, there came suddenly to the son a mental picture of what the father had endured during the past year. He realized all at once how the long days and nights had been passed —haunted by the specter of dishonor and disgrace. As though by some mysterious telepathy, he could see his father, weakened and old and ill. While the two men had not lived in the very closest sympathy which is possible between father and son, they had always been sincerely and quietly attached to

each other. The younger man's affection had been increased by two years of development and self-denial, for there is nothing like hardship and failure for strengthening the home ties and bringing out the full measure of a silent feeling. The love of a young man for his father is too often written upon the page of his life with invisible ink. It needs a few hot tears dropped upon it to bring it out in full legibility.

As he thought of the quiet, self-contained old man, Daniel Everton knew what the writing of the letter had cost. He allowed his thoughts to dwell upon the melancholy picture for a moment, and then bent them steadily to the consideration of what was best to be done. On one point his mind was already made up; he would save that father, no matter what the cost.

Without hearing, his ear listened to the washing of the tide, as it rose steadily and flooded the boggy paddy-fields on his right and carried the current of the river back upon itself in whirling, seething eddies. Without seeing, his eyes rested upon two dirty, sea-scarred steamers, which lay a half mile out, their flags hanging limply, and their rusty, patchy sides cooking in the sun. Then his eye traveled on over the wooded hills of Guimaras until it rested upon the

Daniel Everton knew what the writing of the letter had cost

far off violet outline of the mountains of Negros. There it lingered and sent a message to the searching brain. The brain received it eagerly and turned it over—rejected it, and then took it back again. There was nothing unworthy of consideration which was not in itself dishonorable, and the case called for extreme measures.

There was but one thing to be done, and that was to raise thirty thousand dollars; but one way to do it, and that was to marry Mercedes Paris. Her father had offered him a half interest in the hacienda, with his daughter's hand, and it would be a simple matter to borrow on such security the money needed to save Marshall Everton's good name. He could pay it back in a few years. The very simplicity of the arrangement made him heartsick.

And then, with the thought of marriage, came the memory of the woman he had loved. It seemed a strange fate, that this girl from whom his father had stolen—there was no use mincing terms—should be the same to whom he had offered the great love of his life, and who had refused it.

His mind wandered here, and he found himself wondering how she would feel toward him if she

knew that his father was an embezzler. The agony of the thought was almost past endurance. Was any price too high to pay that this knowledge might never reach her?

The greatest hope of his life had been for a marriage with her. He had failed. That was all a matter of the past. His love was not dead, but it was subdued; and for the rest—there was duty, as he might be able to see it.

He was thirty years of age, which is not old; but which is also not young, from the standpoint of a man who has been trained to no regular work. He had about resolved to remain in the Far East even before this last blow fell. Was it not better to marry the gentle, little *mestiza* than to see his father dragged down to ruin, and the grave? If this load was to be lifted, that father might live on to a ripe old age. He had failed to get the One Woman, and as far as his personal feelings went, nothing mattered, anyhow—certainly they were not to be considered in the face of this appalling alternative.

He need never return to the United States. In the Philippines he would be but one of many similar instances before long. Must the old man be crushed when a word from him would save him?

"Honor thy father and thy mother, that thy days

may be long in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee."

Yes; it could be done.

Would he, if he did this thing, and sank himself in the mire of such a marriage to save another—would he be acting honorably toward the other person most concerned—toward the girl herself? For a moment he felt as tho this view of the situation saved him from the fate which seemed the only one left open.

No! When Mercedes married, her father would, in all probability, arrange the matter; and if not himself, it would be some one who would not, perhaps, do as much for her happiness. It seemed to be the custom of the race to arrange marriages in that way, and she would be better off as his wife than as the wife of—Mispall, for instance.

His wife! How the thought sickened him. He ground his heel into the sand. Cassidy would call her a "naygur." Mrs. Daniel Everton—Señora Everton!—with bare feet in straw slippers, and hair smelling of cocoanut oil. Great God!

He thought of MacTavish and Johnson, who were even now waiting for him to come in to dinner, and

recalled their conversation about native marriages. Why, under the circumstances, and since he was to be the agent of destiny merely, had not God given him a soul like unto those of these men? They would congratulate him when they heard of his engagement, and probably envy him a little. And his own world, if it remembered him, would despise. For once he was thankful that it was a world which finds it easy to forget.

When the sun had long set and the moon had risen, throwing its soft light over the harbor and the silent, sleeping town, he arose and turned his steps once more toward the MacTavish bungalow.

And that night, for the first time in his life, Daniel Everton, soldier, gentleman, and winner of the Medal of Honor, drank deep and often. And because he was their guest, and because it was their nightly habit, anyway, Johnson and MacTavish drank with him until they had left him far behind, and then raced each other down the road to drunkenness until they neared its end, and were relieved by insensibility from going any farther.

The next morning there sped, by land and sea, a cable message to New York, which read: "Yours

received; will send thirty thousand within six weeks. Letter explains."

And by evening there came back over the wires the most singular message ever sent from one man to another across the earth. It was unsigned, and consisted of but three words, and those three were, "God bless you."

With this message in his pocket, and the courage of self-sacrifice in his heart, Daniel Everton boarded his *lorcha* and set sail once more for Negros. And in his heart, in addition to the courage before mentioned, there was a very black despair.

Chapter XII

MRS. CARTWRIGHT MAKES THE TEA

"NO, my dear," said Mrs. Cartwright, emphatically, "I certainly should not want a daughter of mine to marry into the army."

It seemed to Mabel Cartwright, who was the only one in the world that could disobey her mother's wishes in the premises, being an only daughter, and, indeed, an only child, that there was little immediate danger of her marrying into the army, or out of it. Mabel was twenty-nine and plain, and plain girls, as a rule, do not marry after thirty. This one sighed gently, which was her customary method of responding to her mother's forcibly expressed views. It was after five o'clock, but the heat was still sufficiently intense to take the animation out of a pretty woman and hope out of a plain one.

Constance Fairchild, to whom the remark had been addressed, paused to consider it before replying. "Why not?" she inquired at length, taking a biscuit from the tin on the table and carefully

blowing off a red ant therefrom before putting it to her lips.

"Simply because I should not wish my own experience to be hers," rejoined the older woman, deftly extinguishing the alcohol lamp beneath her Chinese, silver teapot, and searching for a handkerchief with which to grasp the hot handle. "I think that every woman should have a home. I've never had one. Since I married Colonel Cartwright, we have lived in forty different houses, and that's no life for a woman. It's all very well while you're young and the romance of the thing lasts, but when you get on in life it's different."

Constance did not reply immediately. She wondered vaguely whether there had ever been a great deal of what her cousin termed "the romance of the thing" between Mrs. Cartwright and the comparatively silent, simple-mannered Major.

"It seems a bit hard on the army officers—that theory of yours. Some of them have really given a very good account of themselves the last three years."

"I am not so sure of that. If army officers were compelled by the Regulations to remain single, it might prove a blessing in disguise. If a man has to spend his life in God-forsaken parts of the earth,

he can get along better without having a family to worry over."

"I suppose they don't always consider that," said Constance. She had arrived in Manila a month before, and in that short space of time no less than three young officers had besought her to "worry" them through life.

"Young men are not given to considering the matter from a common-sense standpoint, in the army or out of it," replied her cousin. "Dear me!" she added, "these ants are really dreadful. I do believe there is one walking up and down my back!"

"You'd better take a bath in kerosene, mamma," suggested Mabel. "It's the only thing that seems to do any good. The whole place is swimming in it."

Mrs. Cartwright made no reply to the suggestion, but resumed her discourse at the point where the bite of the little red insect had interrupted it.

"I do hope, my dear," she said, addressing Constance, "that you will not allow any romantic ideas about war and heroes and brass buttons and all the rest of it to influence you. I should never forgive myself if, just through my bringing you out here, you married an army officer."

Constance smiled. She was amused at the idea

that any one but herself could be held responsible for her matrimonial blunder, if she made one. "I am somewhat of a fatalist in such matters," she replied. "When my time comes—if it ever does—I shall marry the man, whether he's an army officer or a priest."

"The former is quite as much out of the question as the latter. One of your type could never be happy in the army. You're not the sort. The girl for the army is one who has been born and brought up in it, and who could never be happy anywhere else. There are girls who are just as daft as that on the subject."

"A girl who couldn't be happy 'anywhere else,' with the right man for a husband, would be a poor specimen," declared Miss Fairchild, positively.

"You are too literal. I hope you won't put any of your theories into practice."

"I was not aware that I had expressed any theories," replied Constance, smiling.

"Perhaps not, my dear," said Mrs. Cartwright, returning the smile and regarding her young protégée with affection. "I don't think you are the kind to be affected by externals."

"Such as gold eagles, and crossed rifles and things," suggested Constance.

"No; nor silver stars either, for that matter."

"It seems to me you are rather hard on the service, mamma," protested Mabel Cartwright, rising and crossing to the open window. "If army people run down the army, I don't see who there is to stand up for it."

"I am not abusing the army, my dear," protested Mrs. Cartwright. "It's a very necessary institution, no doubt; but I believe——"

"In letting some one else belong to it?" interrupted Constance; "is that it?"

"Some one has to carry arms," said Mabel. "For my part, I am proud to belong to the army."

"Bravo, Mabel!"

"Thank you, Constance. You understand how I feel. Mother never seems to."

"Don't abuse your mother, my love. Mothers are necessary institutions as well as armies. Perhaps yours understands you a little, too."

"Forgive me. I didn't mean to be rude," said Mabel, seating herself on the window-ledge and turning a tired profile to the room.

"You couldn't be, if you tried," said Constance, gently, laying her hand on Mabel's. She had crossed the room to where her cousin sat and stood beside her watching the fishermen, while Mrs. Cart-

wright, who, like most portly people, was given to the excessive absorption of fluids, made herself another cup of tea.

The two girls were in marked contrast, and this contrast struck Mrs. Cartwright with a painful force. Miss Fairchild was of the type of refined beauty which is bred in cities. There is a beauty of the plains, too, but Mabel Cartwright had never been touched by its caress, and was thin with a wiry, normal thinness which added ten years to her age. At twenty-nine she might have passed for thirty-nine; at thirty-nine she would probably look no older than she did that day. Born in a Western frontier post, she had all her life ridden as a man rides and lived as a man lives, without regard to weather and in close contact with nature. While this contact had sweetened her spirit, it had likewise toughened her skin. A woman must be fair of feature and quite young for tan and sunburn to be attractive, and Mabel was neither.

"Will either of you girls drive?" asked Mrs. Cartwright, rising.

"I don't think I care to, for one, thanks," replied Mabel. "I want to try to catch a little of the coloring of the sunset—if it's to be like the one we had last night, and I fancy it is."

"Modest creature!" observed Constance, handing her a drawing block from the table and picking up a couple of pencils. "I'll sharpen these for you."

"Thanks; very much. Is Mr. Taylor coming to dinner to-night, mother?"

"Captain Taylor, you mean," corrected Mrs. Cartwright, who studied the "Army Register" as a devout Catholic priest studies his rosary. "He has just been promoted. I don't know whether he is or not. I told your father to ask him."

"What sort of a looking man is he?" inquired Constance. "I knew a Mr. Taylor once—an army officer."

Mabel paused to consider before replying. "He is tall, very brown, has a sandy mustache, and always hesitates before speaking; very much of a soldier."

"That's the one."

"Where did you meet him?" inquired Mabel.

"In New York, several years ago."

"He ought to be flattered—to know how well you have remembered him," said Mrs. Cartwright.

"Oh, no. I saw enough of him to remember him. He has a very decided personality and one which made quite an impression on me." This was no more than the truth, for men who propose to women

usually do make an impression on them, one way or another. "Has he been in town long?" she asked.

"No, only a few days, I think. He has been serving on one of the southern islands—Negros, I think."

"He will find Manila wonderfully civilized by comparison."

"Probably he hasn't seen a white woman since the war began," observed Mabel.

"Perhaps not. What time do we dine?"

"At half-past eight," replied Mrs. Cartwright, "and it's getting on toward seven now. I must go and see the cook. There will be no dinner for the hungry, if I don't."

"There will be none if you do," retorted Constance. "I have taken notice of that cook. He'll bear letting alone, until you have somebody ready to step into his place."

"We'll see!" observed Mrs. Cartwright, positively, from the door.

"How I wish I had your talent," said Constance, earnestly, noting the fearless, vigorous way with which Mabel threw in her color and drew her brush across the paper, after catching, with what was apparently just a turn of the wrist, the hazy atmospheric effect behind the blue outline of Corregidor. Mabel's one talent was painting, and she did it with

a rare ability. She possessed the double art of knowing what to paint as well as how to paint it. Because few artists are endowed with this double ability, many of the finest landscapes in nature remain unrecorded upon canvas. Constance thought of this as she raised her eyes from the painting to the marvelous beauty of the scene before them.

"I wonder why it is," she said, "that artists do not travel more out of the beaten paths?"

"How so?"

"There is so much out here, for instance, that ought to delight an artist. Do you remember that sunset we saw near the Shau Ting pagoda at Shanghai; with the temple and the graves, and the cold, red light of winter over it all?"

"Perfectly. Some day I want to go back and paint it."

"I should think a good artist could find enough subjects like that in China alone, to keep him busy for the rest of his days."

"Some day, some artist will get tired of landscapes of French rivers, with poplar trees and peasant women in the foreground, and come out and discover China," said Mabel. "It's almost impossible to do anything with this—the light changes so."

"You are succeeding so well," replied Con-

stance, "that when you take it home no one will believe you ever saw such coloring."

"Look at that queer little ship!"

Mabel raised her eyes from her sketch and glanced out across the harbor. "Which one?" she asked, for there were many to which the adjective "queer" might have been applied.

"That little one, on a line with the point of Cavite," replied Constance, indicating the direction with her hand; "she looks like a Spanish or Italian tramp. There's a character and an independence about that ship. She suggests the 'Long Trail.'"

"She does, indeed," assented Mabel. "Can you make out her name?"

"Yes; it's the I-s-l-a- de, the Isla de; that means Island of. The Island of something; Luzon, most likely."

"Tablas," said Mabel. "My eyes are better than yours. The 'Island of Tablas,' wherever that may be."

"It's a little island just north of Panay," said Constance, who had of late been studying the geography of the archipelago with more than ordinary interest. "I wonder if she comes from there?"

"No; probably not. More likely from Iloilo or Cebu."

Constance picked up from the table in the center of the room a pair of Colonel Cartwright's binoculars and, adjusting them to her sight, looked curiously at the little ship.

The great majority of healthy minded people would, if questioned on the subject, scorn to acknowledge a belief in telepathy. Constance was no exception to the general rule, and yet, as she watched the dirty little sea wanderer coming in from her voyage, she suddenly became imbued with an idea; an idea which sent the blood rushing to her cheeks and made the hand which rested on the window-ledge tremble. The impression she received was a startling one, and it was followed by a remarkable elation of spirit. "Nonsense!" she said to herself, as she turned from the window and picked up a book. "It can't be so."

Fate, with whom rests the guidance of most things, and in whose hand lives are as the pawns upon a chess board, was engaged in the task of bringing Constance Fairchild and Daniel Everton together. The impression which Constance received as she watched the "Isla de Tablas" steam slowly on toward the mouth of the river, was, that the person who was dearest of all the world to her was on board.

And as a matter of fact, he was.

Chapter XIII

THE ARRIVAL OF THE "ISLA DE TABLAS"

THE "Isla de Tablas" pursued her course across the harbor, passing, as she steamed, the ships of many nations. There were ships of war and ships of commerce; big ships of the olden days, four months out from Glasgow, around the Horn, their tall masts rising above the short steel ones of the China Sea coasting steamers, like spires of a church above the dwellings of a New England town; little barks which plied between the islands, carrying sugar or hemp; a big cruiser, flying the English flag and holding the record for the fastest trip between Manila and Hongkong; a tiny little Japanese gunboat, fidgeting about, having weighed anchor with no apparent reason but to vomit forth clouds of black smoke and remind the big, drab warships of the United States navy that Japan was still progressing, still keeping pace with the Powers.

Past these craft and many others—for the harbor was unusually crowded with shipping that afternoon

—went the "Isla de Tablas." She arrived at last, with no little puffing and snorting, at the mouth of the Pasig River, grounded upon a sand-bar, swung around with the tide, and rested—her three days' journey from Iloilo accomplished and her responsibilities at an end.

In view of the nature of the occurrence, there was remarkably little confusion; either upon the deck of the "Isla de Tablas" herself, or upon the decks of her neighbors. Her officers occupied easy chairs upon the tiny bridge, well protected by a double awning, and cursed the native quartermaster. Cursed him in moderation, however. They did not consign his soul to eternal fires with relish, as an American would have done under similar provocation. Nor did they direct their observations at the characters of his female relations, but were content to remind him repeatedly of the striking resemblance he bore to certain animals rather low down in the order of intelligence, and especially, the pig.

Officers and crew and passengers alike smoked cigarettes, discussed the state of the tide and the probability of their being able to float the ship that night. The women—there were several on board—had packed away the dirty clothes in which, for the past three days they had lived and slept and, to the

serious injury of said raiment, been ill, and appeared upon the deck, radiant in silk and peoña finery. The men had exchanged their splitting headaches and "malo estomagos" for clean white shirts and new black derbies. The children—and there were many of them, for the passengers on the "Isla de Tablas" had in no wise disobeyed the Scriptural injunction concerning fruitfulness and multiplication—crawled along the deck, peering out through the ship's rail, with the wondering perplexity of childhood, at the other ships, and the lights which were just beginning to twinkle along the Luneta and across the Bridge of Spain.

One of the passengers stood a little aloof from the others, biting impatiently at the end of his long cigar and looking over the ship's side at the rapid current of the river. He wore a suit of clean white duck and the soft straw hat of a hacendero. As he turned from his inspection of the muddy river toward the little ladder leading to the bridge, a Spaniard with bright eyes and of a diminutive stature, which was in keeping with everything else on the "Isla de Tablas," backed down it and turned to greet him.

"Can I get a sampan?" inquired the passenger.

The mate, who, like the captain, wore no uniform,

replied with a smile, which showed two rows of perfect, gleaming teeth beneath a black mustache, and a shrug which manifested an indifference to time and events which might have put an Oriental philosopher to shame:

"After a little, Señor Everton," he said. "You are impatient?"

"Yes," replied the other, shortly. "I have business on shore."

"Be patient, Señor. I have a young sweetheart on shore—and I am patient. Perhaps even now she is on the Luneta, pining for me. Who knows?"

Being unable either to confirm or disprove this last supposition, Everton said nothing. The mate yawned and stared vacantly at the tide, which was rushing by like a mill race. Perhaps one fluid suggested another, for he turned to the American and gave him a second glimpse of the gleaming white teeth.

"Beer?" he suggested, in a tone which combined hospitality with the anticipation of a great pleasure.

"No; thanks. I must get ashore. Here comes a boat."

"Very well; since you wish it," replied the other courteously, as a small dugout came scurrying toward the ship's side, propelled by the muscular brown

arms of its owner; "but you had better make your bargain first."

It was soon made, for Everton was in no mood to haggle over prices, and a few minutes later he and his luggage were landed at the office of the Captain of the Port. He had brought his boy, Pastor, and leaving him to arrange the details of its transportation, he strolled on toward the Calle Rosario and the Oriente Hotel.

It was more than eighteen months since he had passed through Manila on his way to the south, and he now found many changes. He did not notice them at first, for the little Chinese and native booths which lined each side of the Calle Rosario looked much the same in peace as they had in war, but when he emerged at length upon the Square and crossed to the arcade of the Oriente Hotel, he noticed the live, bustling American atmosphere of the town, which was in strong contrast to the sleepy Spanish one he remembered.

Just as he was turning to enter the big portico of the hostelry, he was brought forcibly in contact with a man who was issuing therefrom, in great haste, bearing a telegram. As the stranger stopped he glanced hastily from the paper and apologized.

"Don't mention it," said Everton, courteously.

The man looked at him a second time, with the quick, searching glance of the professional news-gatherer and remarked with cordiality, that he would be damned.

"Will you?" inquired Everton, regarding him with interest. Then, recognizing him, he held out his hand and added, "How are you, Charlie?"

Charlie Howard, special correspondent of a New York daily, returned with warmth the pressure of his friend's hand. "Where did you come from?" he asked.

"From the south," replied Everton, vaguely.

"Which may mean anything from the Pole to Singapore," said Howard. "I heard that you were in the army. Have you been discharged or commissioned or what?"

"Discharged."

"What are you doing here? Going home?"

Everton hesitated, and a slight flush crept over his bronzed face; a flush which the other did not observe, it being one of the things he was not looking for. "I am interested in sugar out here," he said at length. The question recalled to him the changes which had taken place in his life since the days when he and "Charlie" Howard had known each other. He wondered what the other would say when he

knew that "home" to him now meant the roof of Isidro Paris.

"What are you doing in Manila?"

"I came up on business. Only arrived this morning."

"Where are you going to put up?"

"In the hotel here."

"It's good I met you, then; for you can't get a room for love, money, or the paper you represent. The place is packed; but you can put up with me. I'll just rush over to the cable office and send this message; then I'll show you around. Go right up to my room, number thirty, at the head of the stairs —don't get the wrong one; there's a grass widow in twenty-nine—and wait until I come. So long."

Everton expressed his thanks, and Howard hurried away across the Square to the cable office. A moment later the former found himself in a big, cheerless apartment which boasted two cane beds and a large window, fronting on the Plaza. Leaning out of this, Everton rested his head upon his hand and looked down at the scene below.

It was rapidly growing dark and he was just able to make out, indistinctly, the faces of some American women who were strolling about and carrying on an animated conversation with the three or four

navy officers who had come ashore to attend the dance at the hotel that evening. He watched them curiously for a moment, and then threw himself into the one comfortable chair in the room and turned to the consideration of his own future.

It was now May and nearly a year had passed since the night when he had been wounded. As he sat there, watching the warm, cheerful glow of his cigar—the room had grown suddenly quite dark—he wondered whether he wished that the bullet which had come so near to ending his life had done so. On the whole, he reflected, he was glad that it had not. His was a strong temperament and not given to morbidity. It seemed to him that the rest of his life might be made worth the living. It was his duty to make it so in any event. Having made his bed, he was not only resolved to lie in it, but also to make it as soft as possible.

His marriage had been somewhat of a shock to his higher nature, but it had been one in which his affections had not been in any way involved. He had loved one woman in his life and that woman had refused him; if there was to be no romance for him in the future years, there might at least be some domestic happiness. After all, his marriage had its advantages. If a man must marry for anything

but love, it was better to have a gentle little creature, who was prepared by her education and training to remain more or less in the background, and who would be contented to be treated kindly, than to marry one who would deny him his soul's privacy, and feel that she had a right to share in all his thoughts.

His love for Constance Fairchild was not dead, and he was well aware of the fact; but two years had passed since he had seen her, and those two years had been crowded with events. He found that even tho it still existed, that love could be beaten down and controlled until, at length, it would become but a memory. In the future the keynote of his life should be work, and such hard work that it would leave him no time for regret. As far as work could fill it, his life promised to be full indeed.

He had been married several months, and already the improvements which he had planned had been inaugurated. Paris had virtually retired from all active participation in the work of the hacienda. The machinery which had been ordered from the States was now due, and it was with a view to seeing it safely on its way to Negros that Everton had come to Manila.

As the moments passed, he drifted off into a

reverie, from which he was recalled to his present surroundings by the return of Howard. "I'm sorry to have kept you waiting so long," said the newspaper man, as he entered. "I was detained by this confounded censor business. Had some trouble in getting my stuff through."

"What was the matter with it?" inquired Everton.

"Nothing at all; it was simple and true, but didn't happen to indicate that the war was over yet. It was about a little scrap up in the hills in which several of our men were killed."

"I don't see why they should want to hold up news like that."

"Neither do I," replied Howard, rolling up his sleeves and pouring some water into the wash-basin. "I want you to dine with me to-night."

"Thanks; very much. But are you sure that I won't interfere with any of your plans?"

"Quite. I never have any plans which the arrival of an old friend can't change. I want to hear from you about the southern islands. I'm getting up a story on them, which the chief wired for the other day. He wanted me to go down and study conditions, but didn't say anything about who was to take my place up here. This is the only place where

anything of any importance is to be learned; so I'm going to bone the article from Foreman's book, and such men as I can find who have been there."

"Where do we dine to-night?"

"There isn't much choice. There's the hotel here, where the service is bad, and the Paris café, where it's a little better. The table is equally poor in both places. There is more to be seen at the Paris café, so I think we'd better go there."

"What time do we start?"

Howard looked at his watch. "It's nearly eight now," he said. "I fancy that we'd better be going at once; that is, if you are hungry."

"I'm as hungry as I ever expect to be in this climate."

"Come along then."

They left the hotel and walked leisurely down the street. Howard proceeded to ply his guest with questions. To the personal ones, Everton replied briefly, telling of his discharge and simply adding that he had an interest in a hacienda in Oriental Negros, and hoped to make something of it. He said nothing about his marriage, altho he mentally called himself a coward for not doing so. The news would reach Manila soon enough, he reflected. The newspaper man was less interested in the particulars

concerning his friend's life and plans, than he was in the political status of affairs on the southern islands, and so Everton had little difficulty in turning the conversation into impersonal channels and keeping it therein until they reached the café.

"I suppose this is quite a lively scene, after the country you have been accustomed to," said Howard, when he had given their order.

"It is indeed," replied Everton, looking about him.

Their table was on a veranda overlooking the Pasig River and just by the Bridge of Spain, across which little carrametas and quilezes darted constantly, their lights swaying and reeling in a half-drunken fashion. There were several other tables on the veranda, and all but one were occupied. The exception appeared to have been reserved for some party, which had not as yet arrived. The large dining-room within was used almost exclusively by Spaniards and mestizos, who smoked continually during dinner and drank liberally of red wine, from musty, black bottles, bearing no labels. In this room there were also a few enlisted men, on pass from their regiments, looking as spruce as possible in new khaki uniforms which did not fit. On all sides there was the clattering of many diners and the

shuffling of many flatfooted and inefficient muchachos, who collided with each other as they scurried about the room, and who broke, in the course of the evening, no little china.

"Who are all these people?" inquired Everton, when they had passed the fish course.

Howard raised his eyes from the wine card which he had been studying. "Well," he said, "this man at the next table is the representative of the A. P. The one with him is also a newspaper man. He's for a syndicate, which doesn't pay him, I imagine; for he's always trying to borrow money. You'd better be on the lookout for him."

Everton nodded. "What you might call a journalistic adventurer. I know the sort. Every profession has them. But why is the A. P. man paying for his dinner?"

Howard laughed. "That's an unwarrantable assumption," he said. "It isn't always the man who is the most solvent who does the entertaining. I loaned this chap twenty dollars last month, and that night he gave a dinner party to five men."

"Who is the man at that table over there; the one with the gray side whiskers and the sack coat, with the captain of infantry?"

"He's a Congressman from one of the south-

western States. He's out here studying conditions. He studies the canteen question in the café of the Oriente Hotel, I imagine, for that's where he spends the greater part of his time. I interviewed him the day after his arrival on his view of the Philippines. He was crammed full of views before he had a chance to register at the hotel. I managed to get material for a long cable."

"I don't see what you want to cable stuff like that for," said Everton, contemptuously. "I wouldn't give much for his opinion on any subject."

"Neither would I, personally; but we're not the great, thinking American people. The first thing a journalist has to learn is, that when he's hunting opinions on anything, the view of a well-known bishop or politician who knows nothing about it is of more interest than that of an unknown man who has made the subject his specialty. It's the man that counts; not what he has to say."

"It's remarkable how little common sense there is in the world," observed Everton.

"True enough. Most men are satisfied with borrowed opinions. They would rather put up with those than to take the trouble to work out a thing for themselves."

"You can't altogether blame the people at home

for being somewhat mixed as to the state of affairs out here," said Everton. "Each of the papers I have read gives a different view of the situation."

"Few papers are independent thinkers in these days," admitted Howard. "Most of them belong to one or the other of the political parties, and their views are prejudiced accordingly."

"If that's the case, you ought to be ashamed of your calling."

"By no means," Howard protested. "I don't mean to say that you can hire a man to write an article on the moral or social advantages of polygamy, of course; but when a man comes out to a center of public interest like this he has it in his power to favor either side, and do it honestly. As a matter of fact, there are two sides to every question, and the man who starts out with a prejudice in favor of one, usually finds that the prejudice increases rather than diminishes as time goes on. The man who comes out here for an anti-expansion organ will find a bad climate, bad bed in the hotel, devilish bad dinner, bad state of feelings on the part of the natives, mismanagement of the war, and so on. Indeed, he may work himself up into thinking that he has ruined his health by tropical exposure, and goes home with a chronic tendency to fever. If, on the

other hand, he comes out for a paper which favors the retention of the islands, he will make the best of things generally, find a country of great wealth, and natives who are, in their way, a very decent lot. He'll go home and write it up as a valuable acquisition to the country and a fine field for young men."

"All that sounds very plausible," admitted Everton, "and might pass muster if delivered from the pulpit, where no one could answer. But it isn't alone on questions of opinion and public policy that you journalists differ. That's to be expected. You differ radically on simple little questions of fact."

"You blame journalism for what is the fault of human nature. Pick out half a dozen bishops and send them to look at a dog-fight. Do you imagine they'd all have the same account to give, when they got home?"

"I should hope," replied Everton, "that they would have the decency to lie about it, and swear that they had been to a prayer meeting."

Everton raised his glass. "Here's to the capitalist who starts a newspaper and runs it on strictly non-partisan lines; who combines the impartial treatment of some of the magazines and weeklies with the news-gathering facilities of a daily, and who——"

He broke off suddenly, and set his glass back upon

the table, shaking a few drops on to the cloth, where they mingled with the gravy stains left there by the last diners. His face grew slowly white and he shook like a man with the ague.

"Great Heavens, man! What is it? Have some brandy?" cried Howard, in alarm.

"No;" said Everton, huskily, moistening his lips, which had suddenly grown dry. "I—I'll be all right in a moment. Just the heat—don't—don't attract attention."

As he spoke he turned his head slightly so that his face was hidden from the party which had just entered the big dining-room, and which advanced toward the veranda.

Captain Taylor came first, with Constance Fairchild, and they were followed by Colonel and Mrs. Cartwright. As they reached the unoccupied table, they hesitated for a moment, and then, as Constance took the seat which faced toward the harbor, and by so doing turned her back on the table at which the two men sat, Everton breathed a long sigh of relief.

It seemed to him that a remarkable change had of a sudden taken place in his being. The heart, which should have been beating was, apparently, quite still, and the brain, which should have been still, was throbbing with the regular pulsations of the

heart. In that one momentary glimpse of her, all the love and pain of love came back to him, and he realized that they are the two things in life which no wise man will say he has conquered.

Then came the fear of being recognized; if not by her, by Taylor, who sat facing him. He wanted to be away, where he could collect his thoughts and gain some degree of mastery over his feelings. The longing for the quiet and the dark which comes to men, when sorely wounded, came to him. He thought of the bare room at the Oriente as a haven of refuge.

"I—I'm in danger of fainting, if I stay here," he said, controlling his voice with a great effort. "If you will excuse me, I'll find my way back to the hotel."

"I'll go with you," said Howard, promptly. He had paid the bill, and, rising, they sought the street below. When they were in the open air once more, Everton said, apologetically:

"I had a fever last fall; was wounded in the lung. Ever since then I've been a little weak at times. But I don't like to spoil your dinner, Howard. You needn't come to the hotel. I can find my way quite well alone."

"You'll do nothing of the sort. I've had all the

tough chicken and frozen beef I require for one night. How do you feel now?"

"Better; thanks. It was a touch of heat."

"When a man has been hit," observed Howard, "he must be careful not to overestimate his strength. Those things last a long while sometimes, even for life, the doctors say. You had better be careful."

Everton smiled grimly in the darkness, but as they walked down the silent, deserted Escolta toward the hotel, he agreed with him, resolving not to overestimate his strength again.

Mrs. Cartwright's native cook, with whom she had had the altercation that afternoon, had been the unconscious agent of destiny in bringing about the glimpse which Everton had of Constance at the Paris café. As his mistress had not yet learned the futility of attempting to run an eastern household on the same economical and cleanly lines as one at home, the domestic situation had reached a climax, and the cook had solved the difficulty to his own satisfaction, by gathering together his own belongings, with a half-dozen of Colonel Cartwright's best shirts, and leaving. His departure was not discovered until late, and when Taylor arrived, the party adjourned

to the café, leaving Mabel at home with a headache; which she augmented by dining off a box of chocolates which some one had sent her from the States, and a few sweet biscuits.

The conversation had turned upon bravery in war, and Colonel Cartwright had availed himself of the opportunity afforded him of relating several stirring anecdotes of the Civil War and Indian campaigning.

"War is a terrible thing," mused Constance, thoughtfully. "But it is good to know that men can do such things. It strengthens one's faith in human nature."

"It's a great developer," said Taylor. "It brings out the best in a man's character."

"Or the worst," added the Colonel. "The men who do the fine things in war are not usually the ones who need the development. The one who needs it the most stays at home and doesn't get it."

"War," continued Taylor, "is a great Freemasonry. It binds men together. Witness how this war has united the American people."

"You pay them a poor compliment," replied Mrs. Cartwright, "in saying that the only time they are in close accord, is when they are fighting some foreign nation."

"Nations are like women," said the Colonel, mischievously. "Have you not noticed that two of your sex are never in such close sympathy as when they are assembled together for the purpose of abusing a third?"

"That's all nonsense, Laurence. Army officers are worse gossips than their wives."

"That's because the wives give them more to gossip about."

Constance hastened to interpose a remark. She had learned from experience that repartee between her relatives left an aftermath of soreness. "What is the bravest thing you ever saw done on the field, Captain Taylor?" she asked.

"Spare his blushes," advised the Colonel. "Perhaps he did it himself."

Taylor laughed. "No; I only wish I had. It was at Santiago. I was hit in the leg and couldn't move. When our lines advanced, I was left in a very exposed position, under a cross-fire. One of the men in my company missed me and came back. I never saw a man stand under such a fire and probably never shall again. He was hit in two places before he reached me, and once afterwards. Then he picked me up and carried me to cover in a ditch. He got the medal of honor for it."

"What became of him?" inquired Constance. "Is he still in the army?"

"No. He was discharged last fall and is out here now. He was wounded again about a year ago, in a little skirmish with a band of ladrones. It seems strange that a man could go through a day like that at Santiago, and have only flesh wounds, and the one man hit, and very badly hit, in a little brush with a dozen or so of these fellows."

"What was his name?" asked Mrs. Cartwright.

"Everton. Daniel Everton. He remained on the hacienda where he was wounded. The native who owned it afterwards took a great fancy to him and made him his overseer."

"I thought so," said Mrs. Cartwright. "Isn't that the son of your guardian, Constance?"

"Yes," replied Miss Fairchild, simply.

"It seems a strange position for a gentleman—overseer on the plantation of a Filipino," observed Mrs. Cartwright.

"I understood from what he said, that his family had met with financial reverses, and that it had become necessary for him to make his way in the world."

"Where is he now?" Constance inquired.

"I don't know. On Negros, I presume. He was

when I left there, for Panay, four months ago." Taylor had gone to Antigue Province soon after Everton's discharge, and on his promotion had come direct to Manila.

"I liked his father immensely, what I saw of him, that day we called," observed Mrs. Cartwright.

"I am surprised," said Constance, "to hear what you say about his having lost his money. I had understood that he was a man of considerable wealth. It seems strange that I should have heard of it, in such an indirect way, and out here at the ends of the earth, so to speak."

There was a pause in the conversation, during which Colonel Cartwright looked at his watch. The other diners had all left the café and the muchachos were rolling up the cloths on the neighboring tables and showing in various ways that they thought it time the party went home.

"I think we had better be going," said Mrs. Cartwright, rising.

When they reached the Escolta they found their carriages, two small victorias, awaiting them. Mrs. Cartwright and the Colonel entered one, despite the delicate manipulation of Constance, who, for certain very sound reasons, desired to avoid being alone with

Taylor during the long moonlight drive to Malate. In this she was defeated by the denseness, intentional or otherwise, of the older woman, and there was nothing to do but accept the situation, notwithstanding the consequences which she felt it entailed.

"It has been a great happiness to meet you again, Miss Fairchild," said her companion, as their rickety little trap dashed down the incline at the farther end of the Bridge of Spain and turned into the big crescent driveway which leads to the Luneta.

"It is very nice of you to say so," replied Constance. "I hope we shall see a great deal of you while you are in Manila. You must come and see us often."

"You are very kind. I shall certainly do so. Shall you be here long?" he added, after a pause which had been of sufficient duration to be embarrassing.

"A few months, I think."

"Will you return to the States then?"

"I don't know. It all depends on Dick. When his contract expires we are going home by India and Suez."

"You know, he and I were stationed together on Negros—in the same town, for several months. Strange, wasn't it; meeting out here like that?"

"Yes; very. You will probably meet him again

before long. He is coming back to the Second Reserve Hospital."

"I wish he would take the regular army examination," pursued Taylor. "He combines the soldier and the physician as few men do."

"I am afraid Dick will never settle down to anything," she answered, with a slight sigh.

"Will he practice, when he leaves the army?" asked Taylor, who was thinking of something else and searching for words with which to bring that something else forward.

"I hardly think so. I am afraid Dick is no worker. My principal hope is that he will take up some specialty and study it in a scientific way."

"I should prefer general practice, if I was a doctor," said Taylor, who seemed just as far from the topic he wished to introduce as he had been at the beginning of the conversation.

There was another long silence, during which they turned into the Luneta and drove southward toward Ermita.

"I never came to this Luneta without thinking of the poor fellows who were shot here by the Spaniards," said Constance, "particularly Risal. It seems strange that a man like that could have been deliberately murdered and the civilized world care so

little about it. It is only since we have taken these islands that the people in the United States have heard of him."

"Men like him are the exceptions which show us that all men are created full and equal," said Taylor. "If it were not for such exceptional instances, it would be difficult to regard the Malay as the equal of the white man. I suppose that since we have an instance in a man like Risal, we can assume that the whole race is capable of enlightenment."

"They will have their opportunity under us. It seems strange to think of their having a government like ours now, when only two years ago they were under the heel of a tyranny which could shoot down a man like Risal as tho he were an animal."

Constance thought that, as long as they were discussing the future possibilities of the Tagal race, she was keeping the conversation within safe bounds, but unconsciously she gave Taylor the opening for which he had been waiting. It was not a very wide opening, certainly, but it was one which could be made use of, at the cost of being a little precipitate.

"Time does make changes—in governments," he said, "but there are some things more unchangeable than governments."

"Indeed?"

"Yes," he continued in a tone which admitted of no misinterpretation—"men. Time has not changed me."

Constance laughed nervously. "I should be ashamed to confess it, then," she said. "Don't you think we all ought to change, year by year? Don't you believe in evolution?"

Her effort to avoid what was coming was unavailing. Like most men, Taylor was unwilling to take a hint at such a time.

"Change does not mean evolution, necessarily. All the evolution there has been in my life has come through my love for you."

Constance was silent. She would have liked to have spared him the pain of the second rejection, but he had refused to avail himself of the opportunity. A man of readier wit, who did not care as deeply as he, might have done so.

"No," he continued, "I have never changed in that. My love for you has grown steadily and sometimes I have felt as though I could not have lived without it."

"I am so sorry, so sorry," she said, and her voice showed the words were true.

"Sorry that I still love you?"

"Yes, since it is impossible for me to return it."

He drew in his breath and held it for an instant. This was the only indication he gave of what her words meant to him, who had lived for three years in the hope that she might change.

"I wish you could understand that," she continued. "Isn't it unsoldierly to keep on fighting where you know there is no chance?"

"No," he replied, a set look coming into his face. "Not as I understand soldiering. I shall never give up until I know that you care for some one else."

As it was only moonlight, and as her face was in the shadow of a big straw hat, he did not notice the quick flush which crept up at his words.

"Is there any one else?" asked Taylor, unsteadily, noticing that she did not speak. It is singular how calmly a man puts this question to a woman; how coolly he demands that she open her heart, even when she has told him that he has no place therein.

Constance did not reply. It was not an easy thing to confess, that secret which she had only recently acknowledged to herself. After a moment's consideration Taylor realized that he had placed her in an unfair position.

"I beg your pardon," he said. "I had no right to put such a question. All I ask is that when you do

care for any one else—you will tell me of it. That is all."

"I am sorry," she said gently, after they had been silent a little while; "but it is only right that you should know. There is some one else."

He said nothing for some time, and then, just as they reached their destination, he spoke again. "Thank you," he said quietly, and with those words he referred, for the last time, to the one romance of his life.

There was nothing in his manner, as he bade them a conventional good-night at the door, refusing Colonel Cartwright's invitation to come in and smoke a cigar, to indicate that anything out of the ordinary had occurred during the drive home; but when he left them, instead of going to the hop at the Oriente Hotel, as he had intended doing, he lit a cigar and walked slowly back to the Luneta. When he reached it he remembered how Constance had said that she never crossed it without thinking of Risal, and, as he sat wearily upon the bench near the deserted band-stand, listening to the sound of the waves, he came near to envying that patriot.

It takes some time to bury the great hope of a lifetime, and by the time Captain Taylor had buried his, the first notes of reveille were sounding from the

portals of the Quartel de Espagna and echoing from the gray, mossy walls of old Manila. There was a breeze coming in from the west to meet the dawn, and the air was fresh and cool.

The clear notes of the call struck a responsive chord in the nature of this man who was all soldier, and he arose from the bench on which he had passed the night, and turned his steps toward the town.

Chapter XIV

FORT MALATE

CAPTAIN TAYLOR was not the only one to whom thoughts of Constance brought a sleepless night. Back in the close, stuffy room at the Oriente Hotel, Everton, who had retired immediately upon his return from dinner, tossed about on his cane bed until the dawn. There was a fever in his veins—a fever of the soul which hurt him far more than that of the body from which he had suffered the year before.

Until that evening, his love for Constance, while it had been a great element in his life, had never passed absolutely beyond the controlling power of his reason. When he had asked her to marry him three years before, he had loved her strongly, and had believed that she was the only woman with whom he could be happy. But when, after his rejection, he had been plunged into an entirely different atmosphere; when his character had been tried in the

severest of all schools, he had come to realize that he might live his life without her. There is no love which seems so great to the lover as the one which appears hopeless, and now, the more he reflected upon the insurmountable barrier between them, the worse his fever grew.

During the early hours he was alone, for the newspaper man had gone into the big dining-room of the hotel to take part in the dance. Everton had sought his bed, that being the easiest way of getting rid of Howard, who would otherwise have remained for a smoke and a talk.

As he lay there in the oppressive atmosphere of the hot, stagnant night, listening to the music and the laughter in the corridors outside, he was unable to banish her presence from his mind. He had a painfully life-like and vivid mental picture of her in her white gown. In that momentary glimpse, not a single detail of the many subtle ones which go to make up the personality of a refined and dignified woman had escaped him. She was the first attractive woman he had seen since his enlistment, and she was the one he loved. It was what Howard would have termed a "knock-down combination," and the vision had burned itself into his memory with a strength that made him heart-sick.

For the first hour or two after he retired, his mind was a chaos, through which that one vision passed again and again. He could not think collectedly; he could only know that he loved, and loved with a strength which it seemed must drive him mad. And then, with the thought of the woman whom he loved came the thought of the other to whom he had bound himself for life; as if his realization of Constance's charm and beauty had not been sufficiently keen and painful, without this contrast being obtruded upon him. He was to be pardoned if, in the first unreasoning hours of that night, when he abandoned himself to his love for the one, he was unjust to the other. The markedly patrician air of Constance recalled the fact that his wife was of mixed blood. He remembered how an Englishman in Iloilo had spoken contemptuously of the "touch of the tar brush" in referring to one of the mestiza families there. He tried to picture to himself what Constance would think when she learned of his marriage to a half-caste, and he could feel the stinging, crushing force of the contempt with which she would regard him when the time came. Then he thought of his father, and with that thought came the consolation which comes to all men in their hour of doubt and trial, if they are able to reflect that their

suffering is caused by no fault of their own. It is better to go to the stake as the victim of oppression, than languish a single year in jail as the victim of your own depravity. When he recalled how his present plight had been brought about, something of the courage of self-sacrifice came to him, and he grew more calm.

Howard came in about two o'clock, and Everton feigned sleep. The newspaper man was an unnecessarily long time about getting to bed. He smoked a cigar, hummed the fragment of a tune, and finally, when it seemed to Everton that he must be ready to put out the light, he took a drink of whisky and sat down to look over a bundle of papers containing his own stories.

He got to bed at length, a half hour later, and once more in the darkened room, Everton directed his aching eyes upon the ceiling and his aching brain upon the problem which confronted him. That problem was how best to combat this new element, which had suddenly been forced into his life. As he gradually regained the use of his reasoning faculties he forced himself to look calmly on the situation, and to outline his plan of action. And, as is often the case when the brain takes hold of the problem which has been overriding the heart, he found that his

reason was the master of the situation, just as his emotions had been its victim.

After all, affairs were not much worse than they had been that morning. As far as Constance was concerned, he was simply unlucky enough to love one woman and be married to another. There was nothing so very novel in that. Other men had done the same, and would again until the end of time. He was in no worse a position, probably, than any other man who loved without hope. If his love was a painful element in his life, he would fight it, that was all; fight it as he would any other painful element. And what was the best way in which to fight it?

Somewhere, within the reason of each man, there is a voice which is heard at every crossing of the roads. It tells him the right thing to do, and if he followed its counsels, he would be less apt to make a havoc of his life. The voice is not always persistent; frequently it speaks but once, and the cause it advocates is seldom the easiest or pleasantest of those from which a choice is to be made. It is the voice of the Higher Judgment, and it tells us the right course to steer in an emergency.

As the coolness of the dawn came on, and the first tinge of gray crept into the room in which Daniel

Everton had fought through one of the hardest fights of his life, this voice spoke to him and said: "Go—take the next ship—south, preferably; but anywhere rather than remain here. Run away. You would not expose your men to the fire of an enemy unless you had some object to attain—use the same sound judgment now. Don't see her again. Go."

And as, after the long, hot night, his mind tired with its struggle, he heard that voice, he welcomed it and resolved to heed it. The resolution brought him some measure of peace, and he fell asleep at last, to sleep until late into the day.

There is a highway which leads into Manila from Paranaque and the other towns to the south. It runs near the bay and through a country more than ordinarily pleasing to the eye of one who loves the tropics.

At about six o'clock on the evening following their dinner at the Paris café, Mrs. Cartwright and Constance were driving slowly along this highway toward Malate, having come in from Pasay. They had gone there at the suggestion of the latter, who, tired of the Luneta, had felt a wish to be out in the country, where she might drive without talking and

watch the sunset to the accompaniment of her own thoughts.

They had been of Everton, and during the somewhat desultory conversation she had carried on with her cousin, she had been alternating between pride and happiness at his having so distinguished himself on the field at Santiago, and sympathy with him in his present financial straits. She wondered, incidentally, whether she should find him much changed, when they met. Of the fact that they would meet, she had no doubt. There had been no question in her mind as to the quality of his love for her; she felt instinctively that there was no change in that. Then she thought of all he had suffered since the day when they had last been together, and the tears came to her eyes for an instant, tho, on the whole, her reveries were happy ones. She was quite content to let matters rest as they were for the present. Safe in her belief in his love, it only remained for her to tell him, some day, that she returned it. In the meantime, the happiness of anticipation was quite keen enough.

"How do you like Captain Taylor?" asked Mrs. Cartwright, suddenly, breaking the silence which had lasted since their horses' heads were turned toward home.

"Very much, indeed. Why?"

"I just asked the question—that was all. He seems rather quiet."

"Yes. I fancy he is not a great talker."

"They say very smart men are not, as a rule," observed Mrs. Cartwright, regarding a group of native children through a lorgnette. "He has a fine reputation as an officer. I don't take much stock in the theory, myself."

"In what theory?" asked Constance.

"In the theory that because a man doesn't say much he necessarily knows more than the man who does. I believe that being able to talk well is a gift, like singing well or painting well, or anything else. Some men have it and some men have not. Its absence doesn't indicate that a man has an especially fine intellect."

"It's rather a fatal gift when a man hasn't the brains to back it up with," observed Constance.

"I am not so sure of that," replied the older woman. "Especially when one has to entertain. An idiot who can talk well is a Godsend at a dinner table, compared to a professor who doesn't know how to open his head. I think it's disgraceful—the way these children are allowed to go about with no clothes on," she added, as their cochero reined up to

avoid running over a naked little youngster who was playing in the road.

"I think they add to the picturesqueness of the scene," said Constance, laughing. "It is really beautiful out here in the country. I confess I don't care much for the town of Manila."

"It's like any other place in that regard," said Mrs. Cartwright. "The Philippines are well enough, left to the Filipinos, but when the Spaniards came and mixed in their style of architecture, they ruined the landscape. A thatched house of nipa looks in keeping with a banana grove, a house with a tin roof doesn't."

"It's a beautiful country," mused Constance. "I wonder if many Americans will make their homes out here." She was thinking of Everton again, and wondering what plans he had made for his future.

"They are welcome to. I shan't, for one."

"I suppose a man could be very happy in this 'Pearl of the Orient Sea' if he had his family with him."

Mrs. Cartwright smiled somewhat grimly. "It depends on the terms he might happen to be on—with the aforesaid family," she replied.

"Oh, I mean a normal case, of course. One that was happy."

"A man would have to be an abnormal case of happiness to want to bury himself in these wilds, after the honeymoon."

"I am afraid you are not very romantic."

"I am afraid not, my dear," replied her cousin, closing her parasol with a jerk. "I am fond of nature, of course, and all that, but there's nothing that palls on one like scenery, when you have nothing else."

"Oh; I don't agree with you."

"Very likely not; but you haven't had my experience. You have lived within the bounds of civilization. Towns are good enough for me. I am getting to that time of life when I want some other person's thoughts and activity in my life. I had a good many years in the West with my own. The only place where one really lives is a great city."

"It's a question of temperament, like everything else, I suppose," said Constance.

"Undoubtedly. Colonel Cartwright could be happy anywhere. I never saw such a man."

"Isn't it a good thing to be born with a temperament like that?"

"I don't imagine that he was born with it. It's the soldier—that faculty—and it has to be acquired. After a few years, endurance changes

into contentment. It's like getting into any other rut."

Constance could not help thinking that the soldiery point of view was one to be admired. "I think that a man who gets into a happy rut in life is to be envied," she said.

"In my opinion, 'a happy rut' does not exist. Variety is the spice of life."

"There is such a thing as the monotony of variety," said Constance, thinking of the very extended wanderings she had indulged in, and the great variety which had been in her life, and thinking, too, that she could settle very happily into the right rut.

"There is no such thing as the variety of monotony, however," retorted Mrs. Cartwright. "Activity of the mind—that is what you want, and you can't have it on a prairie; unless you are a scientist and collect bugs, like that man at the Oriente Hotel."

Constance did not reply, and both women looked out at sea, admiring the gorgeous coloring, and each occupied with her own thoughts. Constance's took the form of a speculation on the life of her cousin. She marveled that Colonel Cartwright and his wife were not in greater sympathy. Both were, she con-

sidered, very admirable characters in their way, and she wondered why it was that two such admirable characters could go through life without coming to a better understanding. She wondered, too, with a sharp little pang, whether it was true, that after a few years devotion settled into mutual respect and toleration. Everything she had read or heard or observed pointed in that direction; but if it was true, it was one of those truths which her nature forbade her to accept or admit.

Mrs. Cartwright was in many respects a remarkable woman. She was endowed with an intellect which, had she been a man, would have enabled her to rule men. But the methods by which women rule men are different from those by which men rule each other. Not being possessed with a knowledge of a woman's methods, Mrs. Cartwright had begun her married life by attempting to rule her husband by a man's, and she had only succeeded in worrying him. Very keen perception is a good thing, but it does not justify harshness. The fault of the matter was partly nature's, which should have made this woman a man, and partly her husband's, who, years ago, should have pointed out to her nature's mistake and persuaded her to abide by it. The burden of the fault was borne by them both, in that they

went through life within hailing distance of the greatest of all earthly happiness, and did not know it.

Whatever Mrs. Cartwright's reveries may have been, they kept her silent a long time, and the little carriage rattled on its way toward Malate.

It was followed at no great distance by another, in which sat a man, with his hat pulled well down over his eyes, which were fixed upon the inland mountains.

He had spent the afternoon in a drive south of Manila, after lunching with Howard at the Tiffin Club. He had met several acquaintances there—men whom he had known before his enlistment, and who had drifted to the Philippines in civil and military capacities. The renewing of old associations was not an agreeable occupation, under the circumstances, and it was to avoid meeting people whom he knew, especially one whom he knew, that he had taken this long drive. This design was destined to be frustrated by an insignificant incident, and a meeting, which his calm judgment of the early morning hours had counseled him above all things to avoid, was to be brought about by a balky horse.

When they had arrived at the old fortress of Malate, the carriage containing the two women

stopped for a moment, that they might have a better opportunity of admiring the grim old structure, in front of which a sentry paced to and fro. When they had quite satisfied their curiosity, Constance told the cochero to drive on. He brought down his whip with a resounding noise upon the back of each of the horses alternately. One started and lunged forward, but the other planted his feet with a grim determination and declined to be persuaded. After five minutes of alternative coaxing and chastisement, the cochero desisted, and sat helplessly upon the box awaiting further developments.

"Well, this is awkward," said Constance. "I wonder what we had better do?"

"Necessita passar," observed the cochero, looking ruefully at the obstinate pony.

"Out of the question," exclaimed Mrs. Cartwright, indignantly. "We can't walk two miles."

The cochero, judging of her meaning from her manner, shrugged his shoulders and began once more to beat the horse.

"Stop that!" exclaimed Constance, indignantly. "It isn't doing any good."

At this juncture the sentry came up and, laying aside his rifle, attempted to lead the animal by its bridle. When he found that his efforts were un-

availing, he touched his hat respectfully and said, addressing Mrs. Cartwright, whom he recognized as the wife of an officer, "I guess you'll have to send the nigger in town for another rig, ma'am. It looks like this here horse meant business."

"Oh, dear!" said Mrs. Cartwright, fretfully. "That will take an hour at least! How very unfortunate!"

"There's nothing else to be done that I can think of," said Constance, looking up the long stretch of road toward Malate, "unless we walk. I think I'd feel safer to stay here with this soldier, than do that. It's fortunate it didn't happen a mile back."

"I'm glad you find something fortunate about it," said Mrs. Cartwright, looking at her watch. "It's nearly seven o'clock now, and we dine at half past."

"My relief comes at seven, ma'am," said the sentry. "If you was afraid to go back alone, you kin go with them."

"Thank you, very much," replied Constance, bestowing upon him a smile, the like of which he had not beheld for many months; "but I am afraid it is too far to walk. She turned idly and, looking down the road toward the south, beheld a carriage rapidly approaching. "Perhaps this is empty," she added, hopefully, pointing it out to Mrs. Cartwright, whose

face changed instantly, and who breathed a sigh of relief.

"There's a man in it," said the sentry.

"If it's a white man, he'll give us a lift," asserted Mrs. Cartwright.

"An' if it's a nigger, ma'am, I'll make him," added the soldier, affectionately stroking the barrel of his rifle with the hard palm of his hand, and rejoicing mentally that he was in a position to render an official service to the prettiest girl he had seen since he left "God's country."

It was now dusk, and as Everton drew up he failed to recognize either of the women, who stood back in the shadow of the old fortress. He did see, however, that there were two women—American women—standing by their empty carriage, and that they appeared to be in some sort of difficulty. So he alighted and, advancing to them, raised his hat.

"Have you met with an accident? Can I be of any service?"

He addressed the older woman and looked at her as he did so.

Constance had not recognized him, owing to his beard; but when he spoke, her breath came a little quicker for an instant, during which Mrs. Cartwright thanked him and explained the situation.

"Let me offer you my trap, such as it is," he said, turning so that he included Constance in his gaze. She advanced and held out her hand.

"How do you do, Mr. Everton?"

Mrs. Cartwright and the soldier on post saw him take the outstretched hand and bend over it, but they did not hear his reply, because he dared not trust his voice to make one. As he held her hand in his, a wave of feeling swept over him and drowned his utterance. The sentry shouldered his rifle and, touching his hat once more, paced slowly away, knowing that his services were no longer required. And Mrs. Cartwright, taking due note of the manner in which the two had forgotten her presence, and also of the length of time her cousin's hand remained in that of the newcomer, raised her lorgnette and regarded him curiously.

Chapter XV

AN UNSEEN BARRIER

IT was after dinner, it was moonlight, and there was a cool, fresh breeze coming in from the China Sea. The waters of the bay danced and sparkled, and threw themselves playfully upon the hard sands at their feet. The night was soft and balmy, as only moonlight nights in the tropics can be, and there was a big bush of ilang-ilang growing near by, its heavy southern fragrance mingling with the faint, salt smell of the sea.

They were alone. Despite the protest of his better judgment, he had accepted Mrs. Cartwright's invitation and remained to dinner. In doing this he gave that better judgment no just grounds for offense, for, while it had told him not to accept, it had not suggested any reasonable excuse for declining. Even that time-honored standby of a "previous engagement" had not occurred to him until it was too late, and it is one of those excuses which have to be brought forward at once or not at all.

He had, therefore, accepted the situation and remained; and, being there, was deriving as much happiness as possible from her presence, for which he had longed so often during the last three years. He had never realized before how long three years could be.

He had been rather silent during dinner. Not because of embarrassment, but because his thoughts were rushing and crowding through his brain in such a manner as to leave him all but tongue-tied; making impossible any active participation in the small talk of the table. Mrs. Cartwright had noticed his abstraction and had concluded that he was either very much in love with Constance, or else very stupid. It occurred to her once that he might be simply shy, after his life in the ranks, but a second glance at the grave, composed countenance on her right, showed her clearly that this was not the case. Whatever the cause of his abstraction might have been, it certainly was not due to any embarrassment at finding himself at an officer's table. Mrs. Cartwright was not the only one who noticed Everton's manner. Constance noticed it too, and from it drew an inference which made her strangely happy.

After dinner, they had quite naturally been attracted to the garden, with its moonlight, its foliage,

and its view of the bay. The Cartwrights and a young cavalry officer, who dropped in after dinner, had made up a rubber of whist, very much to Mrs. Cartwright's disappointment. She would decidedly have preferred cribbage with the Colonel for herself, and, for Mabel, a tête-à-tête by moonlight with the cavalry officer. Unfortunately, however, the young man had recently taken up whist, and vastly preferred it to a combination of moonlight and Mabel.

"You may smoke, if you like," said Constance, after they had established themselves by the sea wall, where they could have a view of the bay and could even see the flickering lights of Binondo away off to the right.

"Are you sure you won't mind?" he asked, feeling that he would be glad to have the assistance of a cigar, to enable him to get through the next hour creditably.

"Quite. I like it."

He lit his long Manila, and leaning back in his bamboo chair smoked silently, intent upon the solution of the problem concerning his future actions. It did not take many puffs for him to outline his position clearly. The gist of the matter was, that this girl had rejected him three years before because she did

not care for him. They met now as friends, and as long as he was careful not to betray, by word, or look, or intonation, the fact that he still cared for her, his being with her could do no harm. This ought not to be so difficult, surely. He had self-control enough to keep the truth from his lips and shut it up securely back in his heart, where it belonged. As far as his own feelings were concerned, he decided that perhaps he had been wrong the night before, when he determined not to see her again. He would have to go back to the other life soon enough. Why throw away what little taste of happiness might be left to him, in this unexpected renewal of the old? He was entitled to enjoy her friendship for a little while, even tho he could never hope for any closer relationship. Going away wouldn't cure him of his love for her—he was at last too miserably certain of that, and by staying, he might have a few hours of happiness which he could look back upon through all the future years. A half loaf was surely better than no bread.

"It is a great surprise to meet you here," he said, at last. "How did you happen to come?"

"Mrs. Cartwright is a cousin of mine, and I came out to meet my brother."

"Your brother? Have you a brother in the

Philippines?" he asked, in surprise, for he had never met Doctor Fairchild in the old days.

"Oh, yes; you never met him, did you? He is in the army now."

"In the army? You mean an officer?"

"He is a contract surgeon."

"Not Doctor Richard Fairchild?" he exclaimed, a light breaking in upon him suddenly.

"The same. You don't mean to say that you have met him?"

"Why, yes—but I never knew—that he was your brother. And yet it seems strange now, that the idea of a possible relationship did not occur to me. He was Post surgeon at Silay, where I was stationed, and took care of me when I had the fever last year."

She noticed that he referred only to his fever. "How odd. That was when you were wounded—wasn't it?"

"How did you know I was wounded?" he asked in surprise.

"Oh, I know all about you," she replied, merrily.

Altho she glanced at him as she spoke, she did not note the quick anxious look that came into his face, to vanish again, leaving it a shade paler than before. Then, an instant later, dread that she knew of his marriage changed to a hope that it might

indeed be so. If she did, and still received him in this friendly way, his fears that she would despise him had been groundless. "Do you?" he asked at length, wondering how far her knowledge went.

"Yes. I was talking to some one about you, last night. Some one who knows you very well."

"Who was it?"

"Captain Taylor. He dined with us at the Paris café, and said some exceedingly nice things about you."

"He is very kind. I have always had the greatest regard for him. You know he was my company commander while I was in the army. He is a very fine officer. How did he happen to speak of me?"

"It was apropos of bravery on the field. He told how you saved his life at Santiago. Yes," she continued after waiting a moment for him to speak. "And I want to tell you how magnificent I think it was."

Her words gave him the keenest sensation of pleasure that had been his for two years, but there was a mixture of bitter with the sweet. He recalled clearly how, as he had staggered across the field that day, under the weight of Taylor's body, he had felt a stinging pain in his leg and had hoped that if the end was to come, it would come then. There had

been a great happiness in those moments. The wild, fierce joy of battle had been in his veins, and the pleasure of the deed had been doubled by the thought that she would some day learn of it. She had done so, at last, and here, on the other side of the earth, he learned of that knowledge from her own lips. And the most it could ever do for him now, would be to soften the contempt with which she would regard him when the sword should fall.

"It was only my duty, under the circumstances," he replied, "besides—I wanted to do something out of the ordinary and I liked Taylor. Altogether it was quite an act of selfishness."

"Very likely," she observed, thinking that the subject did not admit of argument.

The short reply made him uncomfortably aware that his last words sounded like an affectation and had not been taken in the proper spirit.

"Don't think that I am trying to be like the heroes in novels," he said. "You see, in time of war, all men are looking for just such opportunities. Men are not so unselfishly brave as you imagine. If there was no chance for personal individual distinction and recognition, I imagine that there would be very few wars. I wanted to win the medal of honor and that was my opportunity."

"Just because you were actuated by a sordid, ignoble motive, you have no right to accuse all the others of selfishness," she retorted.

He laughed. "I was judging of others by myself. Forgive me if I took too low a standard."

"Very well, I will forgive you—altho it's not easy. You see I had made quite a hero of you, and nothing vexes a woman more than to have her idols overthrown in that fashion."

"I am sorry."

"But I have not told you yet how I came to learn that you were wounded. I heard it from your father."

"Indeed! How was that?"

"I saw him last September to make arrangements about this trip and he told me then. That was the first I had heard of it." She paused, turning her head slightly, and giving him a quick glance, then she concluded slowly, in a voice which was wonderfully soft and sympathetic: "You have been through a great deal since I saw you last. You must have suffered greatly."

"Most men do—at some time in their lives. I have had my hours of happiness, too."

"I suppose it's necessary," she replied, thoughtfully, "that we should suffer, if we are to develop.

But it seems hard that we can't develop in some other way."

"And the worst of it is that the more you develop, the more vulnerable you become to suffering."

"But more capable of happiness, at the same time, I hope?"

"I don't see the logic of that. It isn't necessary to suffer in order to be capable of happiness. It's not necessary to be abnormal in order to be normal afterwards. A child is happy, and children do not suffer in the way you mean."

"I think you are mistaken there. I believe human nature can reach its greatest height only by crossing the greatest depths; children are not men and women."

"But still I can't believe," he persisted, "that our emotions are like our muscles; that they have to be exercised and played upon in order to be capable of happiness. I can't believe that suffering strengthens the power to enjoy. I think it weakens it, by robbing us of vitality. Perhaps a man's happiness is like his bank account, the more he draws on it the less there is left."

She shook her head slightly, being a believer in the doctrine that whatever comes to one in life, whether joy or sorrow, goes to make character and refine

sensibility. She was temporarily at a loss for words with which to express the thought and before she found them, he added:

"But, nevertheless, I mean to draw on my bank account every time I have the opportunity."

"You will exhaust it if you do, according to your theory," said Constance.

"Perhaps. But, on the other hand, if I don't, I may die before it is exhausted. How long will you remain here?"

"For some time yet. Until my brother's contract expires. I am enjoying it very much."

He reflected that just so long as he could be near her, his credit at that bank would hold out. Why not draw upon it liberally while it lasted?

"I think your financial education has been neglected," said Constance, after a moment. "You imagine that your happiness is in a bank, subject to your order. It's not."

"No?" said Everton, thinking how much happiness there was in being near her. "Where is it?"

"It's in the hands of a trustee, who doles it out as you earn it and when you make unreasonable demands, he turns a deaf ear."

"And what shall we call the 'trustee'?" he asked.

"Oh, call him Fate, Destiny; anything you will."

"I hope," said the young man, with a touch of bitterness in his voice, "that some time—in this world or the next, our trustees will have to make their accountings and hand over the happiness they have failed to pay to us here."

"Perhaps they will pay it yet," said Constance, a soft light coming into her dark eyes.

Everton knew very well that the happiness he wanted could never be his on this earth. He knocked the ashes from his cigar and said: "I think yours is a very mistaken theory. Sorrows are not nice things, any way you look at them. A sorrow to-day does not make a joy for to-morrow seem greater. It is the skeleton at to-morrow's feast."

"No, no, that isn't so," said Constance, earnestly. "I have had sorrows in my life, but they have not remained such always. I have tried to turn them into lessons."

"It depends on the nature of the evil, of course," said Everton. "You will admit that there are things which can crush and crush for all time—putting one beyond the possibility of happiness?"

"Of a certain specified happiness, perhaps; but of all happiness—no. Happiness in a general sense can be had by any one who takes the right view of life."

"In that case you must conquer all your stronger feelings first," he answered. "Sometimes what you call a certain specified happiness means all happiness to a man—" he stopped suddenly, realizing that he was upon dangerous ground. She caught her breath and waited expectantly. After a pause he returned to the discussion of her metaphor. "If the happiness of some people is in the hands of their 'trustees,' that of others is in the hands of a 'receiver,' I imagine," he said.

"Even so—do not men go through bankruptcy that they may be put on their feet again, and start afresh?"

He laughed. "I am afraid you will turn all my arguments against me. I might as well yield now."

"An optimist should always conquer a pessimist, on such subjects."

"Do you call me a pessimist?"

"Not entirely. But you seem to take rather a gloomy view of life."

He did not reply immediately, and when he did, it was to ask some question about her voyage out, and how she had liked Japan. From this the conversation drifted into other channels, and they spoke of many things. He wanted to know what the world had been doing during the two years he had been out

of it, and she wanted to hear of his life as a soldier. She talked of books and the theaters and politics, and the many things which go to make up the life of civilization, and are as meat and drink to the mind long accustomed to their stimulus. He told her of Cassidy and Redder and the man from Tennessee, relating some anecdotes that provoked a laugh, and some which brought tears of sympathy to her eyes. And she noted that in these last it was always of the endurance or the fortitude of others that he spoke. He referred to himself as a mere onlooker. It was difficult for her to realize from the way in which he spoke of the hardships and trials of life in the ranks, that he himself had been a partaker of them.

On one subject there was a reticence which puzzled her. He avoided speaking of his future—its plans or its hopes. He talked freely of his life as a soldier, but the narrative stopped short with his discharge from the army.

Only once during the evening did he in any way refer to his present work, and when she recalled that occasion afterwards, she remembered that he had only done so then because, in a way, compelled to.

She had been speaking again of her call upon his father, and when she had finished he asked, "How was he when you saw him?"

Constance was about to reply, conventionally, that Mr. Everton had been very well, but checked herself in time. She had an opening, now, to say something which she had wanted to say ever since she had learned that he proposed to make his home in the Philippines. She thought that the son's place was at his father's side, under the circumstances.

"He was not at all well, apparently. He seemed old and weak. I think he misses you more than you can know. He seemed like a man with a great weight on his mind."

The last sentence caused Everton to think for a moment before replying. She had seen his father eight months ago. That was before the big draft, which had cost the young man so much, had gone from Iloilo to New York. That accounted for Marshall Everton's having had something on his mind. The son looked at the beautiful girl at his side and then thought bitterly of Mercedes and the ruin which had been brought in his life by the father's act. A touch of this bitterness found utterance in his voice when he next spoke.

"I fancy he is all right by this time."

The reply jarred upon her inexpressibly, and caused her to shrink from him. She remembered the anxiety and love in Marshall Everton's manner,

when he had spoken of this son, and now the son could refer to him like that. The words sounded almost brutal in her ears, and she wondered quickly whether the man's experience as a soldier could have brutalized him and deadened his finer sensibilities. She had read somewhere that war had that effect.

"Your imagination must be a great comfort to you," she observed in a colder tone than she had ever before used in speaking to him. "But I don't see just why you think that your father is better than he was eight months ago. When a man gets to his time of life the months don't necessarily bring more strength as they pass by. Your father is a lonely old man and ill—if I am any judge, and—" she stopped suddenly.

"And what?" he asked, quietly.

"I have no right to say what I was going to say."

"If I can give you the right—please go on."

"Well, then—I think you ought to be with him—that's all. Why don't you go home?"

He hesitated. "I can't very well—just now. I have interests out here which require my presence."

"You know your own business best, of course," she replied. "But I should say that you owed your first duty to him; that you ought to go home and be with him during the last years of his life."

He fell silent again for a moment. Several months afterwards he remembered that remark and wondered why he had been so dense as not to infer from it that she cared for him. His knowledge of women was not as deep as his knowledge of men. It never occurred to him that she could have learned to care during the years they had been separated. Nor did it occur to him that she would never, unasked, have told him what his duty was, unless she loved him and took a personal interest in wishing to see that duty performed.

"I don't think you understand just how it is," he said, after a while. "I am not staying out here to gratify any personal whim. My father has been unfortunate and we are now poor. He wrote to me to remain here if I could find any opening and—well, I am only remaining because I have to earn my living and I don't know that I could do so, at home."

Constance realized that she had forced him to speak of his poverty and that possibly the confession hurt him. In this she did him an injustice. If poverty had been his only affliction, he would have been a happy man that night; if it had been the only barrier between them, he would have spoken words which she wanted to hear.

"I beg your pardon," she said contritely. "I had

no right to speak as I did. Of course you know best."

"I am glad you did speak, since you felt that way."

She played with her fan for a moment, turning over something in her mind that she wished to say, and wondering how to put it. At length she said suddenly, "Speaking of trustees. You know that your father is the trustee under my father's will, of the money he left me?"

"Yes," replied Everton, slowly. "Yes, I know it."

"Well; I had a letter from him the other day, and he said that as the time of the accounting had come, he wished to make it, and—I don't know what he called it, but he means he wants to turn over everything to me. I am going to write and ask him if he can't continue to manage my affairs for me, for the present at least. He will do it, won't he? Isn't that part of a lawyer's business—the management of estates?"

Everton took some time for consideration before replying. "I wouldn't do that if I were you," he said, slowly, after a long pause—one for which she was unable to account.

"Why not?"

"Of course he would be delighted to be of any service, but——"

"But what?"

"Well—he's getting on in years, for one thing, and for another, I think every woman should know how to manage her own affairs."

"If you think he is not equal to it, of course that makes a difference," said Constance, regretfully.

It had occurred to her to employ Marshall Everton to manage her affairs and pay him a handsome salary for the service; but the words, and more than that, something in the manner of the son, made her think that he did not wish it. She could not explain her very generous motive to her companion, and so changed the subject, and the conversation turned upon impersonal matters once more.

As they talked, Everton was disturbed in the happiness of being with her, by the not pleasant thought that he was a coward. He had been with her all the evening and had said nothing about his marriage. He tried to argue to himself that he was under no obligation to do so, but the sophistry did not soothe his conscience. Once he nerved himself to speak, but as he looked at her, he found himself utterly unable to utter the words which he knew would put an end to her friendship and respect. He was just

coming to the conclusion that perhaps after all, the best way out of the difficulty would be not to see her again, when he suddenly realized the lateness of the hour.

"I must be going," he said, rising.

She followed his example and held out her hand. "If you have nothing better to do, come and have a cup of tea, at five to-morrow. Captain Taylor will be here and he will be delighted to see you again."

"Thank you very much," he said. "I will."

Chapter XVI

A SOCIAL VERDICT

CONSTANCE was making the tea, and found the task no inconsiderable one, for the big hall, which served as a living room to the occupants of the house on Calle Real, was crowded.

Lieutenant Humphrey—such was the name of the cavalry subaltern—was there, on Mrs. Cartwright's invitation, and occupied a seat on the big divan by Mabel's side. The young man had but recently arrived from a long tour of duty in a small pueblo near Dagupan. Before that he had been for four years at the Military Academy, and behind that was the recollection of a boyhood passed on a Missouri farm. He was, in fact, having his first experience of what is ambiguously known as "society," and he was enjoying it hugely.

There was also an Englishman, named Marcy, whom the party had met in Japan, and who, after traveling from Shanghai to Hongkong on the same

ship with Constance, had suddenly discovered that he had always wanted to visit the Philippines, and had followed them there.

"Will you take cream, Captain Taylor?" inquired Constance.

That officer had been regarding her silently for some minutes and now, being addressed, started suddenly. "Yes, thank you; one lump, please."

Mrs. Cartwright was the only one, besides Constance, who noticed the absurdity of the reply, and she noticed it because she never missed anything. She made it a point never to become so interested in conversation with any one person, as to be unable to follow what the others in the party were saying. She glanced quickly at Taylor, who noticed her look and grew red.

Constance had already put two lumps in the cup, but deftly fished one out as she handed it to him.

"Ruins tea—milk and sugar," observed the Englishman, who wished to be a party to any conversation which included Constance.

His remark caused her to glance in his direction and she noticed that he had finished his. "Can I give you another cup?" she asked.

"By Jove, no! Miss Fairchild. You certainly need a rest."

"Not at all. I love to make tea. It's such fun fussing with the things. I suppose that we women take the same sort of pleasure out of it that you men do out of your cigar."

"If you were a Filipina, Miss Fairchild, you could have the fun of smoking, too," said the cavalry subaltern.

"Do the native women smoke; the nice ones, the ladies?" inquired the Englishman.

"No," said Everton, shifting uncomfortably in his chair, and joining in the general conversation for the first time.

"I don't know what you call the 'ladies,'" persisted the young officer, "but I've seen lots of the women smoking, and pretty ones, too. On the streets, what's more."

"In Russia, the—ah—ladies smoke," observed Mr. Marcy, putting down his cup and stroking his long blond mustache.

"I don't know exactly what you mean by Filipino ladies," said Colonel Cartwright, slowly. "All coons look alike to me," whereat there was a laugh in which all present joined but one, and that one felt that he was growing crimson.

"I should hardly call these people 'coons,'" said Taylor.

"Nor should I," added Constance. "A coon is a negro, and these people are hardly that."

She noticed that Everton had spilled a few drops of tea on to his white duck trousers. She noticed, too, that he had grown very pale, and wondered anxiously if he could be ill. She did not know that her use of the word "hardly" had cut him like a knife.

"They do have 'ladies' out here as opposed to the lower orders," Taylor insisted, sturdily, "and I've been delightfully entertained by them. Haven't you, Everton?"

"Yes," replied the other, in a low tone.

Mr. Marcy was unable to conceal his surprise at this statement. "Oh, I say," he protested, "you surely don't mean to tell me that you military chaps associate with the—ah—coons in a social way?"

"I have, more than once. We've had to associate with them down in the south. In going about the country we are often obliged to put up with them, and they're awfully hospitable."

"Ah, yes; of course—for a man on active service, don't you know. Under those conditions I fancy one has to put up with anything. But you don't associate with them here in Manila, surely?"

"I don't know any of the native families here yet.

I imagine that I should, however. I believe the others do."

"You won't for long, by Jove," said the Englishman, confidently. "It's because you've just taken hold of the nigger and don't know just what to do with him."

"It's a pity about that," observed Colonel Cartwright, dryly. "We've a few niggers in the States, you know."

Mr. Marcy was too scrupulously well bred to remind his host of the not over able or masterly way in which the citizens of his great republic have handled the negro problem in the last hundred years. The Englishman had not intended his last remark to be patronizing and hastened to explain.

"When I say 'nigger' in that sense, I mean the East Indian and the Malay—not the African. Of course you know more about the latter than we do—or any one else. Now, with us, in India——"

"How is it in India?" asked Constance, interested.

"Why, in India, Miss Fairchild, one has nothing to do with the native, or what we call the Eurasian, which corresponds to your mestiza here. We don't associate with them at all, you know. Absolutely impossible—as much as one's reputation is worth to

be seen talking to one of their women. I don't know just how to express it, but—well, in short, they're niggers, you know!"

After this, for him, remarkably long and lucid explanation, the Englishman relapsed into silence and fell to regarding Constance once more.

"We certainly associate with them out here," said Mabel. "We go to the balls and things they give, and they come to the ones we give."

"You astonish me," asserted Mr. Marcy.

"The cases are not at all parallel," said Colonel Cartwright, prying open a box of cigars with his penknife. "As I understand the matter, the men in India themselves, the natives, don't associate with any women but their own wives, and those they keep shut up in harems. These people are not polygamists. They are very different, and we'll have to associate with them or else they will hate us." He finished opening the box and handed it to Mr. Marcy. "The ladies don't mind," he explained.

"No, indeed. We like it," added Mrs. Cartwright.

"When we are in Rome, we must do as the—ah—Romans do," said the Englishman, taking a cigar. "There is certainly something in what you say about the difference in the races," he admitted.

"Nevertheless," said Mrs. Cartwright, who, it seemed, was destined by fate to differ with her husband on most topics, "I don't believe that we will always associate with them, socially. I think that when we have a larger American colony out here they will keep to themselves and not mix with the natives."

"I know one chap," said Mr. Marcy, "who used to live up near Lahore. He never saw a white woman from one year's end to another, and, by Jove, he up and married one of the Eurasians—deuced pretty girl she was, too. But when he went back to Bombay on a visit, there wasn't a door in the town that wasn't shut tight in his face!"

"Association in a social way is one thing; marriage is another," said Constance, with an expression of disgust. Everton was looking intently at her, and not a particle of that expression escaped him.

Mr. Marcy appeared to be turning something over in his mind. "Well," he observed, slowly, "they needn't have been so deuced hard on him because he married the girl. He might better have done that than to—" He realized, suddenly, that he was speaking too freely and checked himself, flushing painfully. There was a pause of an instant's duration, during which each of those present finished out the

sentence, mentally. All of the women agreed with the unvoiced sentiment, while most of the men disagreed with it. One of Miss Fairchild's greatest gifts was a social presence of mind. She caught up the sentence where he had dropped it.

"Than to go through life without a wife? I am not sure but that I agree with you, especially if he had to live in such a place. No doubt she made him a good one."

"Yes, indeed," said the Englishman, much relieved. "She died."

This addition was greeted with a hearty laugh. "Those cases don't happen very often, though," he continued. "I have never known of but the one instance."

"I have never been in India," said Constance, "but these people strike me as being very intelligent; at least those whom it has been my fortune to meet."

"And excepting those whom it has been our *mis*fortune to employ as servants," added Mrs. Cartwright, dryly.

"You'll make a mistake, if you treat them as equals, just the same," persisted Mr. Marcy. "A nigger's a nigger wherever one meets him."

"Well; such of the American people as mean to

make their homes out here, will have to associate with them—that's all," replied Colonel Cartwright. "They are vastly in the majority and always will be. The Spaniards associated with them."

"Not on terms of equality, did they?"

"They married them."

"Ah, yes; of course they did—out here. And they butchered them pretty freely, too. But they didn't take their wives home with them to Spain, I fancy. Deuced proud chaps—those Dons!"

"Wasn't it only the lower classes who married the natives?" inquired Constance. "As I understand it, the governors and other officials brought their wives out with them from Spain. I can't imagine a Spanish gentleman's marrying a native."

Everton found it impossible to endure the conversation any longer. He picked up his hat, which had been reposing on the floor by his side, and crossed to where Mrs. Cartwright sat. "Must you go so soon?" inquired that matron, cordially, noting that the hand which took hers was very cold.

"Yes—I—I have an engagement, and it is already past the time."

"Come and see us often, informally. We are at home every afternoon before six."

"Thank you very much." He turned toward

Constance, and, as she extended her hand, he noticed an almost tender look in her eyes. She had been observing him during the last ten minutes and had seen, with the eyes of love, that he was suffering. Having no inkling of the true cause of his distress, she attributed it to physical weakness, and she knew that he was the man to endure severe bodily pain for a long time without speaking. Then she wondered where it was that he had been wounded and whether it was still troubling him or not. Like Mrs. Cartwright she noticed that his hand was cold and she noticed also that it trembled.

"Are you ill?" she asked, in a voice so low as to be audible to him alone; so anxious and solicitous as to tell her secret to any one but him.

"No; I am not ill," he answered with an effort. "I will come and see you again."

As he spoke, he resolved that it was the last time he would allow himself to be placed in such a position. The next time he came he would tell her everything, and then she could take what course she chose. He owed it to his own manhood not to risk another experience like this.

"Yes; do," she said softly, "and soon."

An hour later Mrs. Cartwright and Constance were

alone, the callers having left and the other members of the household having gone their several ways; the Colonel to the club for a cocktail and Mabel to the garden with what her mother termed her "everlasting paint box." Mrs. Cartwright was sewing and Constance was sitting with her hands folded in her lap, at the big window which opened on the bay.

"What's the matter with your Mr. Everton?" asked the older woman, biting off a thread.

Constance started slightly. "Nothing, that I am aware of. Why?"

"Didn't you notice him?"

"Not especially."

"I should judge not," replied Mrs. Cartwright. "I did, however, all the time we were talking about India and the natives he was as white as a ghost, or as white as a ghost can be who has been campaigning in the tropics for two years. It's not natural for a healthy man to look like that. I tell you there is something the matter with him."

"I asked him if he felt ill and he said 'no.'"

Mrs. Cartwright advanced a stiff and determined thread-end toward the eye of her needle. When she had passed it through she glanced at Constance curiously. The girl's last remark, taken in connection with her previous statement that she had not

noticed Everton's manner, went a long way toward confirming the suspicion which had long ago formulated itself in her cousin's mind. "Probably it's nothing serious," she continued. "He was sick last year and they say men don't recuperate rapidly in this climate."

Constance made no reply. She was wondering whether, if Everton should be taken sick, it would be proper for her to go and take care of him, and she made up her mind that it would, if she had to move the whole Cartwright family to the Oriente Hotel to make it so.

Not having gotten all the information she desired, Mrs. Cartwright returned to the subject. "I think he's very nice," she said, in a tone which indicated that she was entirely open to conviction in the matter, and invited discussion. Constance, however, did not avail herself of the opportunity.

"Don't you?" persisted Mrs. Cartwright, after a long pause.

"Yes."

The simple monosyllable was discouraging, and the older woman saw that any attempt at a further cross-examination would be detected. So she tactfully changed the subject. After a little, Constance declared her intention of going into the garden.

"You will find Mabel there. I'll let you know when it's time to dress for dinner."

As Constance passed down the broad stairway she encountered the Colonel coming up.

"Have you had your cocktail?" inquired his wife, as he entered the hall and throwing himself into a long chair, picked up a magazine from the table.

Colonel Cartwright was one of those men to whom truthfulness meant entire frankness. So firmly was this characteristic implanted in his being that thirty odd years of wedded life had failed to uproot it.

"Three," he answered, shortly.

"Not three cocktails!" protested Mrs. Cartwright, in some alarm. She remembered how her husband had, nearly thirty years before, when he was a lieutenant and their home a remote frontier Post, visited the Post sutler's once or twice too often, and remained a little too long each time. Thirty years of entire sobriety had never quite sufficed to efface that recollection. "How did you happen to take three?" she demanded.

"Three fellows; each treated," explained the Colonel briefly, without taking his eyes from the magazine, in which he had selected at random an article on how actresses make up for the stage. "Where's Mabel?"

"In the garden," replied his wife, compressing her thin lips tightly and viciously biting off another thread. She had something to say on the subject of the three cocktails, and her husband had discovered that when this was the case the easiest way was to let her say it at once. Her marital displeasure was of the type to thrive on repression and become stronger with every day she remained silent. He laid the magazine in his lap, keeping the place with his finger, and looked at her over the top of his gold-rimmed eyeglasses.

"Well?" he said.

"Well?" she replied, interrogatively.

"You had something to say?"

She sniffed contemptuously. "I don't know that what I had to say is important. You're of age."

"Yes; I'm afraid so," he replied, gazing thoughtfully at the reflection of his white hair and mustache, in the mirror. "But," he added, with a twinkle in his keen gray eyes, "I'm married."

"What has that to do with it?"

"I may need a strong hand, sometimes, to guide me over the pitfalls which beset the path of young soldiers of sixty years."

She smiled, faintly. "I am afraid you are rather a hardened character, Laurence. However, I may

as well say what I started to. I think that people ought to be careful how they drink in this climate."

"Drink," replied her husband, regarding her with comic gravity, "is a thing people ought to be careful about in any climate."

"Of course; but the tropics, especially, are known as being bad places to drink in. The English have discovered it."

"That's right; they have. And so have the Scotch. If you could see the way those fellows put it down at the Tiffin Club, you'd say that Manila came devilish near being the worst place on earth for drink, and that there is no doubt about the Britishers having discovered it."

"You can make a jest of it, if you want to. You can make fun of anything. But the English have had a great deal of experience in tropical campaigning. That's one thing, at least, that they can give you points on."

"Is the Transvaal in the tropics?" inquired the Colonel, demurely.

Mrs. Cartwright scorned to reply to this question, but resumed her sewing. Then, as he glanced at her, her husband saw that her lip was trembling. Leaning over, he patted her affectionately on the hand. "There, there; my love. You are quite

right, and I was only teasing you. Every one knows that drink's a bad thing out here."

"You ought not to take three cocktails at once, then," she replied, somewhat mollified.

"I don't, as a rule."

Mrs. Cartwright finished one piece of work and picked up another. As she was about to begin on this fresh task, she paused.

"Laurence!"

"Yes, Laura?"

"What do you think of young Humphrey?"

"Why, I believe he's a very good officer—as youngsters go."

"Haven't you noticed that he seems to have taken a great fancy to Mabel?"

"No. Has he?"

"A mother's eyes are more open. I've noticed it."

"Pshaw! There's nothing in it."

"Don't you be too certain of that—I am not sure but that it might be a good thing."

The Colonel made no reply to this observation, being absorbed in the article he was reading. He loved Mabel, in his way, but he was also able to recognize the fact that she was not of the type which usually attracts admiration from men. After a moment Mrs. Cartwright resumed:

"I had hoped that the child would marry into civil life, but she seems perfectly daft over the army."

"Let her suit herself," replied Colonel Cartwright. "I see no immediate cause for us to worry about it."

"We ought to settle her in life,—before we go."

"Well; how the mischief are we going to do it? I've thought of it too. I know that if I should die she'd have to keep school or run a boarding house, and the thought's not a pleasant one. But what's to be done? She doesn't seem to care for any one," he added after a moment's pause.

"No. And she hasn't since——"

The Colonel nodded. "That was a pity. He seemed to care for her and would have made a good husband, I imagine. But he's dead and out of the race."

"Not out of her heart, though, and never will be, I'm afraid. However, that is not the only thing to be considered."

"It's a pretty big consideration, with a girl like Mabel," observed the Colonel, thoughtfully.

"Yes—but it can be arranged, and" she added, nodding her head slowly and regarding him with a determined gaze, "I mean to arrange it."

Her husband was about to ask how she proposed to

go about it, but changed his mind and went back to his magazine, instead.

"What is your opinion of Mr. Everton?" she asked, as he opened it.

"I don't know. I haven't thought much about him. You say he's a gentleman and he certainly appears to be."

Mrs. Cartwright shook her head mysteriously. "I am a woman," she said, "and of course you'll say that a woman's instinct is all nonsense, but it's my opinion that there is something queer about that young man. He isn't all on the surface."

"No one is, except people like that Britisher," replied the Colonel, who disliked the English as a race, because he had never known more than half a dozen in his life, and those had chanced to be what he regarded as blockheads.

"Very well," continued Mrs. Cartwright, with the air of one who pours forth a great prophecy to unbelieving ears, "but just you mark my words and we'll see. There's something mysterious about him."

The Colonel restored the magazine to the table and looked at his watch. "Nonsense," he said; "you'd find a mystery between the lines of the drill regulations, Laura. Come; let us join the young people in the garden."

Chapter XVII

PERPLEXITY

THE most uncomfortable of mental attitudes is indecision. A set purpose brings with it a measure of comfort—even tho the resolution may be to do something which is, in itself, painful. One of the most harassing forms of indecision is that which arises from a conflict between inclination on the one hand and duty on the other. This is especially so when the inclination is strong, and the duty not clearly defined.

For a week after the day when Daniel Everton had been compelled to listen to what was virtually his own arraignment and condemnation, he wavered in a state of indecision more painful and prolonged than any from which he had ever before suffered. During the week, he saw Constance but once, and then it was on the Luneta, one evening, and she did not see him. He avoided her, having already learned enough of his own weakness to realize that he could not resist the temptation to withhold something

which his manhood informed him ought to be disclosed.

For a week, then, he remained in this state of indecision; one hour resolved to return on the next boat to the south, and the next, to let matters take their course and drift with the tide. At last, on the morning of the seventh day, he awoke, determined to decide the matter at once, that very morning, and then abide by his decision. If it was to stay, he would call on Constance; if it was to go, he would take passage on the "Diamante," which sailed that afternoon for Hongkong and go thence, direct to Iloilo, by some tramp steamer.

He came to his decision while he was shaving. After arguing the matter pro and con for a week it suddenly appeared to him in a new light. Why not regard himself as secretly married?

It would be weeks, in all probability, before the news of his wedding reached Manila. Both Doctor Fairchild and Taylor had left Negros before it had taken place, and it was not unlikely that months might elapse before any one who did know of it came up and brought the news. Negros was as remote for all purposes of social gossip, as Brazil.

When Constance Fairchild learned that he, Daniel Everton, had married a woman of mixed blood, she

would despise him and when that time came, she would not do so any the less because she had learned of it through a stranger, and not from him. Why anticipate that moment? He was fighting with his own instinctive sense of what was the manly, honorable thing to do, and the prize for which he fought, was the happiness of remaining a little longer her friend. And, since he was able to consider the question as being open to argument, it not unnaturally followed that he won the fight.

Looking at the matter from every side, his judgment told him that he had a right to keep his secret if he so desired. It was an unconventional thing to do, but to be conventional in this case, was to ostracize himself from the society of his countrymen. He felt confident that once the fact of his marriage to a mestiza became known in Manila, the doors of the American households would be shut in his face, just as those of Bombay had been in the face of the Englishman to whom Mr. Marcy had referred. Any doubt he might have had on that score had been dispelled by the conversation that last afternoon. He smiled grimly, as he thought of how Mrs. Cartwright's door would be the first to close and with what vigor that lady would slam it. It never occurred to him to wonder what Constance's feelings

would be, when that time came. He believed that any thoughts she could have for him then, would be entirely contemptuous.

Had he been called upon to decide the matter for some one else, he would unhesitatingly have declared that there was no good reason for remaining and many excellent ones for going away. Being biased by his personal feelings, however, he argued to himself, that, as the difficulty was love, it could not be augmented by his remaining, since he could not fall any deeper in love than he had already done. In this he showed his ignorance, for the love for a woman like Constance Fairchild can grow through years of association. For every congenial, happy hour in the present, there would be an additional pang at the hour of parting; a greater longing through the future years.

Against all cold reason in the matter, was the great force of a long-repressed passion. It seemed to him that all the best of life was in her voice and presence. It was not necessary that they should be alone together; indeed, it was better in many ways that they should not. All he asked was to be where he could watch her face, and hear her voice, as she spoke to others. That was the simple privilege which he craved, and the more he thought of the new life to

which he had bound himself, the stronger became the wish to avail himself of what little remained of companionship with her.

The thoughts of that new life were the hardest to bear of any which filled his brain, during that long miserable week. Whenever he abandoned himself to daydreams of Constance, recollections of Mercedes and their married life came to him, and he shuddered with a self-disgust. To say that he had experienced any great awakening, after his marriage to the little mestiza, would be to give a false impression of the light in which he had regarded her before marriage. He had never loved her, and consequently there had been nothing from which to awaken. Nevertheless, little shocks had come. At the time, they had not made much of an impression upon him. He fancied that he saw in Mercedes a gentle, pliable, little creature, whom he could teach and who would learn. In those days he had had only the natives to contrast her with, and she was as superior to the majority of the native women as she was inferior to Constance.

But now, with the presence of the woman he loved strong upon him, he recalled again all those little things. Once he had surprised her, on returning suddenly from Silay, in the act of chewing betel-nut.

This was the incident which had made the most impression on him. Of course he did her an injustice. The severest critic must admit that it was no worse for Mercedes Paris to chew betel-nut than for an American girl to smoke a cigarette; and that some of the latter do indulge in that pastime and still grow up into lovable wives and mothers, and law-abiding members of the community, there is no room for doubt. But married men, who are in love with other women than their wives, are not invariably just in such matters.

It is not necessary to linger any longer over the narration of the young man's emotions and regrets, for they are not pleasant topics. Suffice to say that he came to the conclusion that, as long as he made Mercedes a good husband, he had the right to be entirely free in his other actions. He would see as much as he liked of Constance until she learned of his marriage, and then——

> "Look not into the past; it comes not back again.
> Wisely improve the present—it is yours.
> Go forth to meet the shadowy future——"

It was not the first time that advice given in stanzas has been misapplied. He resolved to im-

prove his "present" and let the future take care of itself. There was sunshine in his present, and on the horizon of the "shadowy future," a single thunder cloud; behind that, years on years of heavy, sodden rain.

Chapter XVIII

SUNSET

AS the days of that week passed on, without affording her so much as a glimpse of Everton, Constance was at a loss to account for his continued absence. At first, she feared that he might be ill, but on the fourth day, a casual inquiry elicited from Taylor the information that the two men had lunched together. So it was not illness which kept him away.

His apparent neglect puzzled as well as hurt her. At times, she attributed it to indifference, and thought that possibly he had ceased to love her. Naturally enough, this explanation did not meet with a cordial reception, and she argued that even if he had ceased to care, he would still have called. His remaining away so long indicated that there was something stronger than indifference which prompted him to avoid her. He was a comparative stranger in Manila and she was the only friend he had in the town. He had been in love with her

once, and even if he had ceased to regard her in that way, he would still be inclined to linger in her vicinity. Past experience had taught her that a man who is rejected by a woman is prone to linger thus until she, or he, falls in love with some one else.

A few men there are who linger even after the former event. Taylor was one of them, and he had dropped in nearly every day. His visits gave her much pleasure, for she admired the quiet soldier and enjoyed his companionship. But he was unable to fill, in any way, the void caused by the other's absence.

Having arrived, then, at the conclusion that it was not indifference which prevented Everton's calling, Constance determined to find out, if possible, what it was. To the consideration of this question she devoted a great many idle moments, and not a few which would not otherwise have been idle. On several occasions when Taylor was with her, he had marveled at her absent-mindedness, and Mrs. Cartwright had commented on it to her spouse, who had treated the matter in much the same way as he had the references to his daughter's matrimonial affairs.

Late on the afternoon of the seventh day, Constance and Mabel, refreshed by their long siestas, were in the garden of the house on Calle Real. The

latter had made the tea and had already finished her cup and returned to her novel. Constance, who had but just joined her, was slowly sipping the beverage and gazing dreamily at the ships in the harbor. She was thinking that it was just the seventh cup of tea she had had since the day when she had last seen Daniel Everton. And he had promised to come again "soon."

Suddenly Mabel tossed her novel aside and picked up a box of chocolates. "I have no patience with that book!" she exclaimed.

"What is the matter with it?" inquired Constance, recalled to her present surroundings.

"It isn't true to life. I hate books which are unnatural."

"Perhaps this is only unnatural from your point of view. Where did you get it?"

"On the ship—from Mr. Marcy. This is the first time I have had a chance to read it."

"What has become of Mr. Marcy? He hasn't been here for several days. I wonder why he has deserted us?"

"Possibly he has given up," suggested Mabel, mischievously. "Have you refused him, Constance?"

"No; certainly not. He hasn't asked me," replied Miss Fairchild, coloring slightly. That the English-

man had not done so, was due solely to the fact that she had declined to allow him. Proposing marriage was not the Honorable Charles Marcy's specialty, and whenever he had gotten upon dangerous ground, she had managed, skilfully, to avoid a declaration. "You ought not to ask questions like that, Mabel," she continued, severely.

The only reply to this reproof was a low laugh. "I didn't imagine that you'd tell me, if he had. Don't you like him?"

"Yes; very much. He's not over brilliant, but he's a gentleman."

"He's more than that."

"More than a gentleman?" asked Constance, incredulously.

"Yes. He's an 'Honorable.'"

"Oh!"

"Isn't that of any importance? I'm democratic, but I wouldn't mind being the Duchess of—something-or-other, just to see how it seemed."

"That's what one of my friends is, and she finds the 'something-or-other' very difficult to get on with. But you have not told me yet in what your book is unnatural."

"Well; the heroine proposes to the hero, for one thing."

"I should think that was enough."

"There were extenuating circumstances, however."

"Such as what?"

"He—the man that gets proposed to—is an invalid, with hip disease."

"What happens then?"

"I don't know. I haven't finished it yet, but I believe he gets well after they are married and falls in love with another woman."

"How ungrateful of him!"

"Yes; isn't it? I don't believe a nice girl would do that. Do you?"

"Propose to a man?"—Mabel nodded—"I shouldn't care to."

"But suppose he had an infirmity like this one and didn't feel that he had a right to ask you—would that make any difference?"

"Perhaps it would, if I cared for him and was sure he cared for me."

"The girl in this book thought she was sure—of both."

"Then I don't think what she did was unnatural. Let me know when you have finished it. I would like to read it."

"Take another case," continued Mabel, settling

herself contentedly in her chair for a discussion on love and matrimony. "Suppose you were very rich and the man who loved you was very poor— What's the matter?"

Constance had put down her cup with enough decision to all but crack the saucer. "Nothing at all. I was thinking of the case you mentioned."

"Oh! I thought you had burned yourself," replied Mabel, regarding her curiously.

Constance looked thoughtfully out to sea. This, then, was the solution of the problem which had been puzzling her for nearly a week. When he had asked her to marry him, three years before, Daniel Everton had been rich. He was now poor and their relative positions were precisely those of Mabel's suppositious case. There was scarcely any doubt of it. It would explain his keeping away from her, and his avoidance of a certain topic when they were alone together. What other significance could his remaining in the Philippines, after his discharge, have? She felt confident that he was not a man to bury himself for years on a remote tropical island for the sake of making a little money, unless he had some very especial need of it. No doubt he saw before him an opportunity to make a fortune sufficiently great to justify him in asking her to marry him. Of course he

was quixotic and foolish to allow his poverty to keep him silent, but she could not help admiring his quixotism a little. It was in keeping with everything she had observed in his character.

"Well?" said Mabel, interrogatively, when Constance had been silent for several minutes.

"Yes?"

"What would you do, if a poor man fell in love with you, and felt that he had no right to propose?"

"Nothing; that I can think of now."

"Surely you wouldn't allow the difference in your fortunes to keep you apart?"

Constance avoided a direct answer to this question. "Yours is an impossible case," she replied, guardedly. "If he didn't propose, how could I know that he cared for me?"

"Oh, pshaw! He'd contrive to let you know that, without proposing."

"I don't agree with you. If he was the sort of man to think that because of his poverty he couldn't ask me to marry him, he would be too scrupulous to betray the fact that he loved me."

"Do you think a man can love a girl and not betray the fact?"

"Yes; I do."

"Well; I don't," declared Mabel, positively.

"I don't think I should propose to him, in any event," Constance continued, with a smile.

"You're not half as romantic as the girl in the book."

"You shouldn't cite her case as an example. You said that her husband fell in love with another woman."

"That was her misfortune, not her fault, and it is something which might have happened to any one."

"Possibly. But if it's going to happen, it would be comforting to know that he did the proposing. Don't you think so? What is the title of your book?"

"It's called 'A Woman's Offer.'"

"Is it indeed? Then I don't think I want to read it."

"They say you should never judge a book by its title."

"Yes; but some titles are beyond the pale. That's one of them."

"You are too critical. It must be awfully hard to write good books."

"Naturally. It's hard to do anything well."

This observation was followed by a pause in the conversation. A pause which Constance employed in forgetting entirely what the conversation

had been, and Mabel in munching her chocolates. After a moment the latter observed:

"It's a pity we can't do with our lives as the novelists do—only live those parts which are interesting and skip all that is commonplace. Put in a double row of little stars in place of all the days when nothing happens, except having to discharge the cook, or to go and see some old relative you don't care anything about."

Constance smiled. "I am afraid that if you did, the habit would grow on you dreadfully, and you'd miss a great many of the small happinesses of life. You'd find everything commonplace after a while, and your book, what there was of it, would be all asterisks. Where are you going?"

Mabel had risen and picked up her novel. "After my paint box," she replied, as she started for the house.

Constance returned to her thoughts, which, for the moment, kept her fully occupied. As she fixed her eyes upon the distant outline of Corregidor, she noticed a column of black smoke on the horizon to the South. It arose from the water in a thin spiral, which, as it mounted higher and higher in the still, hot atmosphere, broadened out into a canopy of haze. A tiny black speck at its base was all that was to be

seen of the ship—one of the little coastwise steamers which ply between the many rich islands of the great, unawakened archipelago. As she watched it, she recalled the odd premonition she had had on that other afternoon, when she and Mabel had witnessed the arrival of the "Isla de Tablas." He had, it seemed, been on the little craft, just as her inner voice had said. She wondered whether she would have any such warning before he came again.

While she was indulging in this harmless speculation, and as tho to refute the theory of premonitions, a firm step resounded on the walk behind her and the voice that she had missed for a weary week greeted her.

"Good afternoon, Miss Fairchild!"

"I thought you had deserted us," she said, as she gave him her hand. He looked remarkably handsome in his suit of snowy duck, and she noticed, with a little feminine shock of pleasure, that the disguising brown beard was gone and that he wore only the mustache with which she had been familiar in the old days.

"I have been very busy," he murmured, apologetically, dropping into the chair which Mabel had vacated. "Your boy told me that I should find you here."

"Yes. We—Miss Cartwright will be back presently—came out here to watch the sunset and to have our tea. Can I give you some?"

"No, thanks."

There was an awkward little silence. She wanted to ask what he had been busy about, and he was puzzled to know what to say to her. There were a hundred things he might have said but they were all of a forbidden character. He picked up her book and opened it idly.

"What have you been doing of late?" he inquired, keeping his eyes on the title page.

"Nothing very novel," she replied; "a drive every afternoon, and one dinner, on Wednesday, at the palace. How delightfully un-American that sounds, doesn't it—a dinner at the palace!"

"It does, indeed, and the man who lives there has more power in these islands than most kings. To be Military Governor of ten million people is no small honor."

"And how about yourself?" she asked, casually. "How have you been passing the time?"

He hesitated, embarrassed by the question. Then he said, "I have been occupied with the business which brought me to Manila."

"And what is that?" she inquired, with an air of

friendly interest which concealed what was, for her, an intense curiosity.

"The machinery for our hacienda," he replied, briefly.

She noted the plural pronoun. "I didn't know that you had a hacienda. What do you mean by 'our'?"

"I have an interest in one," he said, reflecting that it was useless to attempt any concealment of his business affairs with a view to hiding the fact of his marriage. "It is on the island of Negros."

"Who owns the rest of it—a native?"

"No," he answered, quickly. "That is—he has native blood in his veins, but he's virtually a Spaniard. His father was a Spanish officer."

"Tell me more about your hacienda," Constance continued, after a short pause, whereupon he described the hacienda in some detail and even went so far as to refer, in terms of admiration, to Señor Isidro.

"How long do you expect to remain out here?" she asked, when he had finished and they had been silent some little time.

"I don't know," he replied, "for life, probably."

She glanced away from him and joined him in his inspection of some noisy, native fishermen, who were

dragging their nets on the beach below. "How about all the rest of it?" she inquired, at length.

"All the rest of what?"

"Of life. You have told me how you propose to make a fortune, but that's not all there is to be considered."

"No?" he inquired, pulling his hat down over his eyes to shade them from the red glare of the sun, which had begun to drop rapidly. "What else is there?"

She regarded him once more; this time, curiously. The man who had loved her three years before and whom she had since learned to love, would have deemed such a question superfluous. "The better part of your mind, of course," she said, with a slight accent of impatience. She liked to have him respond quickly to her flashes of thought, and felt disappointed when he failed to do so. "And occupation for it. Surely you must realize that the life of a tropical sugar planter means stagnation?"

"Need it, necessarily? Why can't a man keep abreast of things out here as well as at home? Are not most of the men we know there absorbed in some one business? What does it matter whether it is work on a Pacific island or work in Wall Street, so long as it is work?"

"Yes, but—but this is work for nothing but money?"

"That's what most of the work in the world is done for, isn't it?"

She might have answered that she had not thought him like most of the men in the world, but she kept this opinion to herself. "A man can have a higher destiny than to spend his life among Filipinos, even tho he makes money by doing so. What is money worth, if life has to be spent in a country like this?"

He repeated her question to himself in the bitterness of his spirit. What, indeed, was money worth? For the paltry sum of thirty thousand dollars he had sold all the hope of a life's happiness—sold the highest right and privilege of man, to stand by the side of the woman he loves and plead his cause.

"I think," she continued, with a touch of embarrassment, "that very often men attach too much importance to money, and to the necessity of having it. It isn't everything."

He made an impatient gesture of protest. "God knows I care nothing about money for its own sake!" he exclaimed passionately. Then he checked himself and went on more calmly: "But the want of it can make all the difference in life sometimes, and——"

He broke off suddenly and turned to look once more at the sea. The expression of protest passed from his face and it took on its habitual resignation. She watched the change creep over it and marveled at his self control. She felt instinctively that she had touched upon a great passion, which for some reason he meant to keep down, and she admired the way in which he was succeeding.

It was a strong face, and had in it the story of suffering without complaint. Endurance had been written upon it in a hundred fine little lines, which she saw now for the first time as the soft light of the sun fell upon them. Morally, as physically, the ability to bear without protest makes the strongest type of men. An Indian becomes a Brave by bearing tortures unprotestingly. There are Braves among the whiter races as well, and they gain admittance to the brotherhood in no easier way.

A partial realization of this came to Constance as she looked at him, and her love, which was very great indeed, took on the most complete form that the love of woman can assume, the desire to reward. Thoughts of his physical bravery, of his wound, his sickness and his poverty, crowded close upon her and she knew how gladly she would reward him for it all, if he would but speak. She was beginning to

think that quixotism could be carried to an extreme and become a nuisance.

"A man," she said, slowly, tracing with her forefinger the title of the book, which he had impatiently tossed aside, "makes a great mistake who takes money into consideration when—when happiness is involved." She paused and actually trembled at her own audacity. She was leaning forward a little now and waited anxiously for his reply. If, after that remark, he chose to adhere to his quixotic notions, she could do nothing more.

"You can't lay down any set rules about things," he said, uneasily. "A man can only judge according to his lights, and—if he makes a mistake—abide by it."

She gave a little sigh which, inconsistent as it may seem, was half of relief. She had done with the personal, or to be strictly accurate, with the general, which is but a thin disguise to the personal, and a long silence fell upon them.

The sun sank lower and lower. "I sometimes think," she said dreamily, as the red disk was touching the sea to the northward of where the great, wild island of Mindoro lies, "that the end of the day out here is like the end of life for a soldier who dies in battle. It goes out in such a blaze of glory."

He glanced almost moodily at the splendors of the West. "A soldier's life doesn't go out like that," he replied. "Most of them die afterwards, in field hospitals, and there isn't much of the blaze of glory about them. It's just fever and pain until the end comes. When a man is badly wounded the glory part of the business is at a discount."

Corregidor was taking on the same violet coloring that the Panay mountains had worn on those many evenings, when he had strolled away from the laughter and the coarse jests of his comrades that he might be alone. He recalled the evening when the ludicrous incident of Benita and the shirt had occurred, and traced the course of events from that time onward. He saw now the strange fatality which had been in that meeting. He would be back there soon. Through life those violet mountains would be the prison walls, which would shut him in with the bitterness of his sacrifice, and bar him from the world of life and love outside.

Chapter XIX

SERGEANT CASSIDY MAKES A DISCOVERY

"HE'S half fool," said Cassidy, scornfully, "an' th' half av him that isn't a fool, is ginerally dhrunk. Taken togither, th' two halves av him is hell t' git on wid. Gawd knows what ud becoom av us, if th' town was to be attacked."

He was referring to no less a personage than Major Crompton, who had appeared upon the scene two months before, and taken Taylor's place in command of the detachment at Silay. The Major was an old man, and knew he had but three years more to serve. So, after making a survey of the situation and forming a pretty true estimate of the opportunities for distinction, or amusement, afforded by his new detail, he had sought refuge and oblivion in drink. At the very moment when Cassidy was giving his estimate of the Major's character in the terse words which are given above, that officer was snoring heavily in his quarters. And that moment was high noon.

"De down isn't goin' to pe addacted," replied Redder, consolingly. "Hi, Telarama! Two more peers!"

Señor de la Rama had stepped out of the little café for the moment, and the muchacho who sat dozing behind the counter made no sign of having heard. Cassidy took a moldy cracker from the table at which the two men were sitting, and threw it at him. As it struck the native on the shoulder he opened his eyes, wearily.

"Duo cervays, machoch, an' git a move on you," said Cassidy, reaching for the dice box. "I'll shake wid you t' see who pays," he explained.

Redder blew a dense cloud of fragrant blue-white smoke into the air and thoughtfully watched it rise to the ceiling. He had won ten dollars from the recruit the day before, and always had money saved from pay day. Furthermore, he was a man with no family ties. "I'll dreet," he said magnanimously.

"Oi'll not interfere wid you thin. Here's how!"

"How!" grunted Redder, burying his blond mustache in the foam of the beer. Both men drank long and deep and then Cassidy put down his glass and said:

"What'll be th' outcome av ut?"

"De oudgome of whad?"

"Av this state av affairs. What'll happen t' th' Major?"

"Nodding. Nopody's goin' to rebord 'im. He can trink hisself to teth, I zuppose."

"Let's hope he does, thin, before he drinks hisself before a gineral court-martial."

"Dey nefer gort-martials officers for trunkenness," replied Redder.

"They don't, eh? Well, Oi tell you they do. Whin the'r' drunk on juty like this wan is, most av th' toime."

"He doesn't ged trunk on dooty. He fills ub effenins."

"Don't you believe it," retorted Cassidy, nodding his head, significantly. "He's dhrunk now. Oi tuk th' mornin' report up, after mountin' th' guard. 'Oi'll take it,' sez th' Lootinint. 'The Major isn't feelin' well.'"

Sergeant Redder took a little deeper respiration than was his wont, which was his usual method of preparing himself to ask a question. With him, asking questions was an effort only justified by a high degree of professional interest. "Vy didn't de Loodenent sign it?" he inquired at length.

"He dassn't," said Cassidy. "It wouldn't do. Oi'm sorry fer that young man. When th' Major's

dhrunk, he has t' go ahead an' do th' best he knows how, an' whin th' ol' man coomes around, he gives him hell fer havin' done ut widout authority. He's havin' a hard loife these days, an' no mistake."

"I'd dake his chob," said Redder. "I'd like to pe an officer."

"You don't know enough," replied Cassidy, frankly. "An officer in th' rigular army av th' United States is th' finest thing it's possible fer anny man to be."

"How aboud bein' Bresident?"

Cassidy was somewhat staggered at this, but rallied quickly. "That's th' same thing. He's th' Commander-in-Chief av th' army."

Redder regarded him stupidly. The German, while he excelled in his knowledge of regulations and drill, as far as the company was concerned, had never had the additional energy necessary to inform himself as to the higher departments of his profession.

"How can he gommand de army?—He don'd know noding aboud id."

Cassidy shrugged his shoulders. "He don't have to know annything about it. Th' higher up you git th' less they do know about ut. Wan av th' new brigadeer-ginerals is a dhocter and wan is a cavalry

first lootinint; wan is th' son av an ex-rebel, an' another's th' son av his pa."

"If ve should have a gread var, vat would ve do mit men like dose fer de chenerals?"

"Wait until your big war coomes along, an' you'll find out. We'll lick 'em, that's what we'll do."

Redder shook his head ominously and once more raised his glass. "A cheneral ought to pe a soldier, an' an oldt von," he observed.

"Most av our ginerals are, and thim as ain't will be before your great war coomes. Besides, we don't need ginerals. Our company officers, lift t' thimselves, can lick annything anny European power can turn out. You Dutchman, you. The ginerals can stay at home and write their autobeeograyphys."

"De'r vot?"

"Their autobeeograyphys. Th' stories av the'r lives, in plain Dootch. Have some more beer?"

"Zertainly."

There was a pause in the conversation, during which their glasses were refilled, and Cassidy lit a big cigar. Redder was turning something over in his mind. When the Irishman had been smoking in contented silence for several minutes, the German said significantly: "I vas a vitness pefore a cheneral gort-martial vonce, at de drial of an officer."

Cassidy looked at him in surprise. "What uv it?"

"Zimply dis. If it comes to a guesdion between dos dwo," indicating the officers' quarters with his pipe-stem, "you an' me knows vacts—dot's all."

Cassidy nodded. "We do that," he replied, "an' what's more, your humble servint has made careful notes av th' dates an' other things."

Redder grunted, as an expression of the mutual understanding which had been arrived at, and the two fell silent once more. With them, conversation had covered twelve years, with short interruptions, and did not have to be continuous. Besides, they had consumed just enough beer to render sufficient, a contemplative enjoyment of their tobacco. Directly, a voice broke in upon their respective reveries, and a familiar, lanky figure appeared in the doorway.

"Hello, boys! What ah you all a-doin'; drinkin' beer?"

"Yis," replied Cassidy. "Have some?"

The man from Tennessee shook his head. "Ah promised mah ole mothah on her dyin' bed that Ah wouldn't never drink," he replied, taking a plug of tobacco from the hip pocket of his khaki trousers and biting off a liberal chew.

"Oi admire you fer sthickin' to it, thin," observed Cassidy. "Moi mother was tuk off suddint, widout havin' toime t' lave anny insthructions behindt. What she'd have done if she'd had a lingerin' illness, Oi don't know. What made your mother so down on th' dhrink, may I ask?"

"She allus said as how it war the cause of mah father's death."

"Deleerium treemuns?" inquired Cassidy, sympathetically.

"Nope. Pap didn't drink much hisself. He had a little still up in the backwoods, whar Ah come from. He war hung fer killin' a revenue officer."

"Oh!" said the Irishman. For once in his life he had no comment to make, and the conversation lagged.

The day was very hot and still. From his vantage point in the doorway the Tennesseean could see a woman's figure far down the white, blazing highway. She was the only human being in sight and on her head she bore a large basket.

"Ah have just come from the officers' quartahs," remarked the Tennesseean. "The Lootenant is tryin' to sober the ole man up, Ah reckon. The Majah war cussin' powahful strong about somethin'."

"It's about his toime," said Cassidy, contemptuously. "He ginerally comes around about dinner toime."

"It's a damn shame, that's what it is. Ah think it's remahkable the way the Lootenant puts up with it. The ole man talks to him like he war an enlisted man; worser than last company commander talked to the men."

"It's certainly remarkable," observed Cassidy, "the way that Lootinint has tumbled t' his job. He's learned more soldierin' in wan year than Redder, here, has in twilve."

The German continued to smoke placidly, ignoring the good-humored comparison. "Ah think he knows more about it now than the Majah," said the Tennesseean.

The woman with the basket had been steadily approaching, and as he finished speaking the soldier glanced up and recognized her. "Hello, Benita!" he exclaimed, in greeting.

"Buenas tarde," replied Benita Llopis, lowering the basket to the ground. She had not changed any in the year that had passed, having already attained so great a degree of the ugliness of extreme age that a twelvemonth more or less did not matter.

"How's me old swateheart?" demanded Cassidy,

with a grimace which was intended to be affectionate. "Come in an' Oi'll buy you a dhrink av bino."

She shook her head, having understood the last word and gathering from it his hospitable intention. "No quiero."

"What kin we do fer you?" the Irishman continued.

She shook her head once more, whereupon Cassidy rendered the question into execrable Spanish, much to the admiration of Redder and the Tennesseean, neither of whom were scholars.

Benita drew a note from her breast and handed it to him. Cassidy took it and scrutinized the outside of the envelope which bore no address and was somewhat soiled. "Where did you get it?" he inquired, in Spanish. She pretended not to understand.

"It's a love letter, mebbe," suggested the Tennesseean, humorously. "Read it."

"What does it say?" demanded Benita, impatiently.

"Oi'll see," said Cassidy, tearing it open. A letter dropped out, written in a fine hand with many flourishes. "Raymimber, that Oi'm not much on your Spanish spellin'," he explained to his companions as he picked it up.

He did not read the letter, for as he unfolded it,

his eye fell upon two words on the first page. They were "inemegos" and "Americanos," and as he read them he gave a low whistle.

He rose abruptly. "Come with me," he said, imperatively to Benita. She picked up her basket and, without explanation to his companions, Cassidy led the way toward the center of the Plaza. When they were out of hearing he stopped her and inquired, "Where did you get this?"

"You are his friend," she said, dramatically, "and I appeal to you. I cannot read. I love him as a son and——"

"Stop," said the Irishman. "Go slow. Who are you talking about?"

She glanced nervously over her bony shoulder. Then, seeing that they were alone, she continued, lowering her voice to a whisper, "It was given to me by José this morning, to give to her. I want to know what is in it?"

"Who is 'her'?"

"Señora Everton."

"The devil!" said Cassidy, in English.

"What did you say?"

"I asked you what José gave it to you."

"José Mispall."

"Oh!" he exclaimed, and opening the letter once

more he began to read slowly, lingering over some words and skipping hastily over whole paragraphs which he saw were of an endearing nature. After a time he was able to make a very fair translation of the epistle, which ran as follows:

"My Poor Neglected Darling:

"My heart yearns for you in sympathy with your solitude and loneliness. It swells with a fierce, indignant protest at the thought of the neglect of which you are the victim; you, the most beautiful of women, the most unfortunate of wives! Were it not that I see for you in the near future a lifting of the cloud veil, which is shrouding your young life, I would despair, your plight would bear me down.

"Courage! But trust to me, but believe in the greatness of my love for you, and all will be well. Our people are arousing, slowly but surely. The hate of the conquerors grows daily and hourly more intense, more fierce. We are waging a great fight against a powerful nation, and some say that the cause is hopeless. But I ask you, not as the woman I love, but as the most reasonable of women, can we lose if we persist? Already the American people are weary of the struggle. There is a large political party which favors the glorious cause of our national independence. We are a nation of millions of brave

men, who need but to realize their splendid future to arise and throw off the yoke which has been about their necks for centuries. We will yet place in the field an army of four hundred thousand brave patriots and then—what think you? Will our enemies, the Americanos, match us with an equal force? No! Our friends in the United States will be aroused in our behalf and the American forces will withdraw.

"And then? Then I shall be a general in the army of the Republic. Not three months ago I was in honored conference with our great chief, Emilio Aguinaldo. He said to me, as I was leaving him, 'Señor, such patriots as you make one's heart warm. When our great day comes; when we are in possession of this great country of which we are the rightful sovereigns; when we have expelled these enemies; remember that you have a friend in Aguinaldo. You shall be a general, if you will, and perhaps the Governor of your beautiful island. I salute her patriots through you!'

"I kissed his hand, and I, a strong man, wept. Ah, my adored one! My queen of the tropic isle, we both love! Of what use is all the worldly honor which will come to me, unless you, whom I love, can share it? What care I for the sword of a general? I

want you—you. I worship you. With every beat of my heart, I adore you.

"If I may say it, what a contrast will my devotion be to the coldness of this foreigner to whom you, my poor misguided darling, have allowed your life to be joined. I do not wish to make your burden greater, but I feel that I must tell you that he is guilty of a worse wrong toward you than neglect. I write what I could not breathe to you, if I looked in your pure, trusting face."

Here followed an imaginary account of an intrigue which Everton was carrying on in Manila, together with half a page devoted to the expression of José's outraged feelings on the subject. He then resumed:

"To be true to such a man is to be false to yourself. Your allegiance should go with your love, and that, you have assured me, is mine.

"I am going shortly to join a small company of our country's soldiers, to share their fortunes in the field, until such time as we shall be ruling in the cities and hunting the Americanos in the mountains. Within a month all arrangements for my leaving will be completed, and then—then you must come to me to share my lot. I fear to send this through the mail as I am under suspicion. It goes by the faithful

Benita, to whom I have been kind for years, and who is wholly devoted to me, and to you. Trust her in all things. She will share our short exile. I will write again through her, and tell you when, and where, to join me. Courage in the hour of flight!

"At the thought that you will be mine, my love all but bursts its bounds. My darling! How happy we shall be together!"

The remainder of the interesting epistle was in the same strain as the last lines given, and Cassidy did not trouble himself to read it. He folded up the letter and put it in his pocket.

"Th' writer av this," he said, reflectively, to himself, "should hav' been an Irishman. If Oi'd his gift av gab, Oi'd be a lootinint-gineral in th' army av th' exiled, perhaps."

Benita gave an exclamation of impatience. "What is it? What does he say?"

"More than I can tell you—quick," replied Cassidy. "It's a love letter."

The old woman stamped her foot at this, and called Mercedes by a name which cannot be recorded on these pages.

The soldier regarded her humorously. "Well, perhaps she is," he admitted, "but that's not the question of importance," he added to himself. "The

main thing is how t' git ahold av that small company av noblemin what'll be ginerals an' governors av islands—if we can't arrange t' make corpses av thim instid. Benita!"

"Si?"

"You are a fine woman, Benita." She grinned coyly, and lowered her head with a languishing glance. "Come with me."

"Where?"

"To the Teniente, or the Commandante."

"Is that best?"

"Yes. This is more than a love letter. José is an insurgent."

"Will they kill him?" she demanded, drawing back.

"No. You know very well that they won't, unless in battle, an' you won't find him there. He's more of a correspondent than he is a soldier. We must act together, you and I, on behalf of Señor Everton. He is our friend."

She was apparently satisfied with this, and without further protest followed Cassidy across the Plaza to the quarters occupied by Major Crompton and the Second Lieutenant.

"Yes," said the Second Lieutenant. "There is

but one thing to do, and that is to let her get this letter and then wait for the next one. We could arrest Mispall, but it wouldn't do any good if we did. The General would turn him loose again. What we want is to get our hands on that band of insurgents."

He was addressing Cassidy, who stood before him, with Benita a little in the rear. From the adjoining room the sound of heavy breathing indicated the condition of the Commanding Officer of Silay.

"The only snag, so far as I can see," continued the young officer, "is what he"—indicating the next room with a jerk of his head—"will do when he wakes up and finds that I have acted without consulting him."

In the weeks that had passed since Major Crompton had assumed command of the Silay detachment, the Second Lieutenant and Cassidy had many times been obliged to consult together as to the discharge of the Major's duties, which usually devolved upon the subordinate between the hours of midnight and three o'clock in the afternoon. In this way certain facts had come to be recognized between them, altho they were never spoken of openly.

Cassidy advanced a step nearer and lowered his voice. "Beggin' th' Lootinint's pardon, but it

wouldn't do t' consult him. He'd send out an' arrest Mispall, th' way he did old Ramus last week, an' spoil th' hull bizniz. When he—ahem—wakes up, it'll probably be all right, an' if it isn't, sorr," the Irishman hesitated for an instant and then went on boldly, "you just inform him that you acted on your bist joodgmint, whilst he was incapacitated fer jooty. Ivry man in th' company'll be behind you, sorr. He won't dare say a word."

The Second Lieutenant sat buried in thought for a moment. Then he said, "Yes. It's the only thing to be done. I've made a true copy of the letter, and if he wants to arrest Mispall, that will be evidence enough. Benita!" he added, dropping into his fluent Spanish.

The old woman advanced. He placed the letter in a fresh envelope, as like the old one as possible, and handed it to her. "Give this to the Señora Everton," he said, "and let no one know that we have seen it. Bring me all the others that are given to you, and be as friendly to José as possible."

"Si, Señorito," she replied, taking the note. "Adiós."

"Adiós."

She turned and left the room, shuffling down the stairs in her straw slippers.

"It looks as tho the war wasn't all over yet, Sergeant," said the Second Lieutenant, his eyes sparkling.

"No, sorr; not for tin years yet. Is that all fer now, sorr?"

The officer nodded and Cassidy saluted and withdrew. As he followed Benita across the Plaza a moment later, he muttered to himself, "Let's hope t' Gawd that if there is a foight, th' ole Major will hav' his usual jag on an' stay home, so that th' Lootinint can git th' credit."

Chapter XX

BENITA TAKES A HAND

A FEW days after Everton had departed for Manila, to await there the arrival of the machinery which they had ordered from the United States, Señor Isidro succumbed to an obstinate attack of rheumatism which confined him to his bed.

In a few weeks, many things can happen. In this time, José Mispall had become a frequent visitor at the hacienda and had spent many hours alone with Mercedes. Had the shrewd old father been well enough to be about, it is probable that he might have seen, in the changed manner of his daughter, something to excite his suspicions and show him that the man's presence in the house was becoming somewhat of a disturbing element. Señora Paris was not one to observe. She knew, of course, that José was frequently alone with Mercedes, but after marriage, things are permitted which would not be dreamed of before. It was not love which prompted José to

make advances to the young girl. He had come to the conclusion that if he could induce Mercedes to elope with him to the mountains, he would be in a position to dictate terms to her father. He would retire permanently from patriotism, which had not proved a paying business, and live on what he could make out of Señor Isidro. The plan was simplicity itself. All that had to be done was to persuade Mercedes, and Mispall had not found that difficult.

Prominent among Malay characteristics are passion, treachery and vanity. An ethnological student might write a volume on the race, and not describe them as aptly as does Mr. Kipling when he calls them "half devil and half child." Through her vanity and passion and jealousy, Mercedes was persuaded to do things which set at naught the carefully laid plans of her far-seeing parent. With her, the "child" was largely predominant. Mispall had begun by making insinuations and false representations concerning Everton and his motives in marrying her, and what the native described as his desertion of her so soon after marriage. She was of a jealous temperament and his innuendos had fallen upon fruitful soil. Then he had grown bolder, until at last he had reached the stage of violent love making. From that time on, it had been easy sailing.

Late on the afternoon of the day when Benita had gone, in her perplexity, to consult Cassidy as to the advisability of delivering Mispall's note, Mercedes was reposing on the big balcony of the hacienda mansion. She was looking out over her father's and husband's broad acres, with something very like a scowl on her pretty face, which had of late worn an expression in which there was as much of a spoiled, fretful child as there was of the jealous, revengeful woman. If Everton could have seen her at that moment, he would have been shocked at the change which had come over her. Just as a face which is plain during childhood, can become almost beautiful with the awakening of a noble soul, so one which is placidly fair in a state of undevelopment, can lose its fairness at maturity through the agency of unrestrained wilfulness and passion.

As the moments dragged on, this sullen look became more marked, until at last she arose and began impatiently to pace up and down the veranda, keeping her eyes fixed upon the Silay highway. At last she espied Benita walking leisurely along, and her face lightened somewhat. She paused at that end of the veranda which was nearest to the road, and watched the old woman.

When she chose, Benita Llopis could be leisurely

in her movements, and she did choose to be so on this occasion. She even stopped altogether, once or twice, to gossip with the wives of the hacienda laborers. At last she drew near and, looking up espied Mercedes. She placed her fingers on her thin, cracked lips with an air of great secrecy. If there was anything which Benita loved, it was an intrigue. To be the central figure in a plot involving the American officers and Señor Everton's pretty wife, was a situation which gave her a keen sense of her own importance. Cassidy had tried to impress upon her the fact that the best way to be of service to Everton was to expose his wife's infidelity, and had succeeded so well that she was prepared to assist at an immediate elopement.

"Come up here!" called Mercedes, impatiently.

Benita entered the house and a moment later joined her on the balcony.

"You have a letter from him?" inquired the girl, eagerly.

"Hush—not so loud," replied Benita, in a whisper, glancing over her shoulder with a fine affectation of alarm. "Yes!"

"Give it to me."

"Do you love him?" inquired the old woman, without moving.

"Ah, yes. You know I do. Give it to me, dear Benita."

"And you will take me with you, when you go?"

"Go where—what do you mean?" demanded Mercedes suspiciously.

Benita saw that she had made a slip, and hastened to set it right. "Of course," she said, insinuatingly, "you will go with him, before the other returns."

"Give me the note."

Benita handed it to her and watched her nervously as she broke the seal and began to read. Then the old woman breathed a sigh of relief. Mercedes had no suspicion that it had been tampered with.

"What does he say?" asked the servant, innocently, when Mercedes had finished.

"You know very well I can't tell you," replied the girl, with a blush. She had grown beautiful again for the moment, for she was thinking of the man she loved and not of the one against whom she fancied she had a grievance.

"If you want help, let me know."

"Yes, surely. I can trust you?"

"I worked thirty years for José. I have held him in my arms when he was so long—" Benita measured off about fourteen inches of her thin, brown arm. "If you have any letter to send back," she added, as

she turned toward the door, "you had best give it to me. It is safer."

Mercedes nodded and began once more to read her letter. As Benita reached the threshold of the door, she paused.

"Oh!" she exclaimed, "I forgot."

"What?" asked Mercedes.

"Here is another letter. Your mother told me to give it you. I don't suppose it is of any importance," she explained, as she handed the girl an envelope which bore the Manila postmark.

Mercedes took it and glanced contemptuously at the superscription. Then she raised her eyes to Benita's. "He has been away," she said, plaintively, "for five weeks, and this is but the second letter he has sent me." She tore open the envelope hurriedly. "Look!" she cried, holding up the letter. "One page—to me, his wife!"

Benita shrugged her shoulders. This was her favorite gesture, and each time she used it there appeared to be grave danger that her peona waist would fall from her shoulders to her feet, there being no hips to arrest it, once it escaped detention by the bony shoulders.

"Husbands are different," she said shortly.

"Ah, yes; it's too true."

"José may be your husband some day," observed Benita, looking out across the corn fields.

"He is different," replied the other happily, turning to her husband's letter. She read it, and then, rising once more, walked rapidly up and down the veranda. Then she began to upbraid the writer in tones of passionate reproach.

"He treats me," she cried, "as a child. I, his wife, a woman eighteen years old. What did he marry me for? He never loved me, and he didn't even know how to pretend that he did! Is he superior to me, because he is an American, one of a race of cowards? Two months after our marriage he leaves me—business, paugh! Do you imagine that José would leave me to attend to any business so soon after our marriage? Why couldn't I have married him, instead of a stranger who spends his days in the fields and most of his nights smoking with my father. If my father needed him, why couldn't he have made him his partner? Why need they have sacrificed me, a woman with a soul? I tell you it wasn't kind, it wasn't fair, it——" she broke down completely, and sank sobbing into a chair.

Had Everton been ill, or wounded, Benita would have nursed him and cared for him with a mother's tenderness; but she had no compassion with this frail

creature of her own sex. On the other hand, she was deterred by no moral scruples from aiding and abetting her in her infidelity. She thought that if a wife has it in her to be faithless, the sooner she elopes with her lover the better—for the husband at any rate.

"You reason finely," she said.

Mercedes raised her head and looked at the old woman with a half frightened glance. "Tell me," she asked in a whisper, "is it very wrong to love as I do, is it a—sin?"

Benita indicated with an expressive shrug that it probably was not, and if it was it made no difference anyway. "You will have to confess," she admitted.

The girl's face clouded, and she sat for some time holding Mispall's letter tightly in her small hands. Then she spoke again. "It would be more of a sin to live with him again. He has not been true to me."

Once more Benita shrugged her shoulders. She was not sure but that the girl was expecting altogether too much.

"Benita!"

"Si?"

"I have made up my mind," said Mercedes, positively. "I am not a child. I will no longer be treated as one."

And in this she was right. The days when she was to be guarded and cherished as little children are, were drawing to an end. But whether she was to benefit by the change from childhood to womanhood the hour did not disclose. Like many wiser men and women, who have placed the conclusions of their own fine reason against the dogmatic, God-given laws of right and wrong, she had yet to learn what happiness or pain might lie in her emancipation.

Chapter XXI

COLONEL CARTWRIGHT TRIES AN EXPERIMENT

MRS. CARTWRIGHT inclined her head to one side and surveyed the table with intense satisfaction. "Well," she exclaimed. "I don't think there's anything the matter with that, all things being considered. Now, I'll just place the dinner cards and then——"

"Why don't you let the servant do those things, Laura?" inquired her husband, who stood in the doorway, looking very spruce and military in his white duck uniform, on which the insignia of his rank glittered in the light of the table candles.

"Because, Colonel Cartwright, I've no desire to sit in anyone's lap, or have the cards served as a course after the soup, or take any such chances. I know these natives better than you do."

Her husband advanced and stood beside her. "We're doing a lot of entertaining, it seems to me," he said. "I'm afraid that we're going it beyond our means. Don't you think so? You know I told you

that we ought to try to lay up a little, each year, for Mabel's sake."

"All this," replied his wife, indicating the table with its array of linen and wine glasses, "is in the nature of an investment. Do you recollect the conversation you and I had some six weeks ago, relative to Mabel and," she glanced over her shoulder to make sure that they were alone, "and Mr. Humphrey?"

The Colonel's features relaxed into something which was about half way between a smile and a grin. "Perfectly," he said.

"Well; it's all but accomplished, and if you leave things alone a while longer," she hesitated, searching for words in which to express a delicate fact, "Mabel's future will be arranged for."

The Colonel crossed to the window and looked out. "Have you said anything to her?" he inquired, after a moment spent in gnawing the end of his white mustache.

"Only in a general way. I have explained to her how she would be situated if you and I were to die."

"What did she say?"

"Nothing—especially; but I could see that it set her to thinking. I fancy she likes him."

"It seems devilish cold-blooded."

Mrs. Cartwright was exasperated. "Why so, in

Heaven's name?" she demanded. "What are we doing that every parent ought not to do? Really, Laurence, you try my patience. One would think we were leading the girl out to auction! We're simply giving her the advantages of a little social life; she's never had enough to hurt her, poor child. If Mr. Humphrey likes her and there is no objection to him, why not invite him to the house occasionally? The mistake I made was in saying anything to you about it."

"Your arguments are certainly plausible," admitted her husband. "She needn't accept him, if she doesn't want to, need she? You haven't coerced her in any way, have you?"

"Certainly not. I have just had one or two sensible talks with her. If, after that, she would rather keep a boarding house or give lessons in painting, than to be the wife of a nice young officer with a future before him, it will be her own lookout. We will have done all of our duty, at any rate."

"You'd better go and dress for dinner," said the Colonel, looking at his watch. She left the room and he returned to the hall, where he stood by the window, looking down into the garden and ruminating upon the thoughts suggested by his wife.

He wondered whether it might not be possible that

there was something in this idea of Mabel's marrying, after all. Her marriage would change many things. Of late, he had become pretty well disgusted with his prospects. He had been passed over again and again by younger men, some of whom had been youngsters under him, and who were half his age but possessed of twice his influence. He had attained the age when he could retire at any time, and the only reason he had not done so before was the additional pay of the active list. As long as things were in this unsatisfactory state, he had felt that he ought not to forego that. But with Mabel's future assured by marriage, the prospect would be different. He and Mrs. Cartwright could travel, if they wished. He drew a long breath and wondered how it would seem to be free to come and go. On the whole, he concluded, Humphrey was a very nice young fellow.

"Good evening, Colonel!"

The senior turned and exchanged a cordial handclasp with the very young man who had been in his thoughts, and who, as it happened, was engrossing a very large share of the thoughts of another member of the household, at that moment, fastening a rose in her hair and wondering if he would notice it.

"I'm afraid I'm a bit early, sir," explained Humphrey. "The truth is, my watch caught cold when I

was swimming the Pasig one night and has gone at fever heat ever since."

"Punctuality is a great virtue in a soldier, my boy," replied the Colonel, "and," he added, as tho moved by a sudden inspiration, "should be rewarded. Have a cocktail?"

"Yes; thanks," replied the young man.

"Come into my little den," said the Colonel, leading the way to a small room off the hall, where he had installed his writing desk, and which was his favorite retreat. It commanded a view of the garden and the bay, and in it he kept his best cigars and an old pipe or two, which latter he was not allowed to enjoy at large about the house.

"The others won't be here for ten minutes yet," he said, as he mixed the appetizers, with a skill over which the subaltern smacked his lips. "Cosey little place this," observed the latter, seating himself on the table and puffing contentedly at his cigarette. He was thinking that the Colonel was a fine old fellow; a bit slow-going and unprogressive perhaps, but still a devilish nice old chap.

"Yes; I think so," assented the older man. "I believe in having one room in the house where you can do as you please."

"Freedom's a great thing," said Humphrey,

thoughtfully, "but," he added with a slightly bored air, "a man gets tired of it after he's knocked about a bit—begins to think he'd like to have a home and a —er—family and all that. Don't you think so?"

It was just as well that Mrs. Cartwright, who at that moment was, with the assistance of Mabel and a Filipino maid engaged in the process of "hooking up," did not hear the reply of her spouse to this query. Indeed, it is as well that wives in general are not blessed with the gift of hearing everything their worse halves say, when away from them.

"Matrimony's a bad thing for a soldier," replied the Colonel. "Complicates official matters remarkably sometimes. The best thing to be in the army is an agreeable bachelor, with sense enough not to pay too much attention to any one woman. If you're that, all you need is a friend in the Senate and your fortune's made."

"I can't believe that, sir," protested the young man, stoutly. "The best success in the world is won by individual merit, and I think that"—he flushed a little as he hesitated—"a man does better work with the right woman. Don't you think so?"

"Depends on what you mean by the best success," said the Colonel, ambiguously. Humphrey was not listening. It is one of the characteristics of the early

twenties to ask for older men's opinions, and then go off into day-dreams while they are being given. "Do you think we will be out here long, Colonel?" he asked, suddenly.

"In the Philippines? Yes, I imagine so. Pretty lonely work it'll be too. You youngsters will have years of it, no doubt."

"Do you think the war will last as long as that?" asked the subaltern, in some dismay.

The veteran of four wars sniffed contemptuously. "War? This is no war. There will be fighting from time to time for ten years yet. The war is over, but the necessity for having troops here, isn't. It will mean garrison and police duty mostly."

"All the more reason for having a wife, I should think."

"Good Lord, no! You don't know what women are, my boy. Do you think a woman would be content at Dagupan, or in Mindanao? If you happened to be stationed in Manila it would be well enough, but you won't be. The places where a young officer has the best opportunities professionally are the places where it's the least possible for a woman to live." When it came to the expression of his honest opinion, the Colonel was swayed by no motives of diplomacy; deterred by no recollections of the weeks

which Mrs. Cartwright had spent over her little scheme. In fact, the honest soldier had already forgotten the matter.

The subaltern shook his head. "A soldier has a right to his home life, I think. Needs it too, more than most men." This opinion was of recent origin in his mind. He had been, heretofore, as strong in his sarcastic denunciation of the holy estate of matrimony as most young men. He had passed the time when the logic of the Colonel's position could appeal to him, and, after a pause, continued, gloomily, "It's a hard life—the life of a soldier. It seems a lot to ask of a woman that she should share it."

The Colonel adhered to the outspoken airing of his views. "I don't know about that. You'll find any number of women ready to share it, when the time comes. Don't worry over that."

Mr. Humphrey was not really worrying over it. The speech had been in the nature of a rehearsal. He meant to use it again with Mabel, later on; to show her how unselfishly able he was to consider her welfare. Men are prone to sneer at what they term "feminine logic." It's a singular example of a man's; this waiting until he has done his best to teach a woman to care for him, and has asked her to marry him, before explaining to her how perfectly he under-

stands the many reasons there are for her not doing so.

The young man shook his head sadly. "It's not plenty of women a man wants,—it's the one."

The Colonel glanced at him quickly. There was something in the cavalry warrior's tone, which carried a meaning. What might have followed if they had not been interrupted is purely a matter of conjecture. They were interrupted.

By the time the whole of the party had assembled, Theopilo—such was the name of the head table boy—had announced dinner, with a sweeping bow, no less than seven times, very much to Mrs. Cartwright's chagrin. At the rehearsal that afternoon she had endeavored to impress upon his slow working mind, by dint of constant repetition, that he was to announce the meal when the last of the guests had come. The result had been hopeless confusion. Left to himself the boy would have worked out his own salvation; as it was, he became hopelessly confused and concluded that the safest plan was to make his announcement after the arrival of each new guest.

"That makes the seventh time," said Constance, laughing and holding out her hand to Everton, the last to arrive. "I suppose he's afraid that if we

don't sit down immediately, the cook will steal the dinner."

"Let us spare him any further anxiety then," said the Colonel, giving his arm to Mrs. Merrill, the wife of an infantry major, and leading the way to the dining room.

To Mr. Marcy was allotted the young and rather pretty wife of a navy paymaster; while, needless to say, Humphrey, whose step was even more elastic than the recent cocktail justified, bore in Mabel. Everton took Constance, while Taylor took Mrs. Cartwright. The newly-promoted captain felt a little shade of regret, and wondered whether his two bars were not costing him rather dearly. While dressing for dinner he had noticed how liberal the sprinkling of grizzled hair was becoming, and how thin it had all grown about the temples. Then he dismissed the thought as he had learned to dismiss regrets in his life, and made himself just as agreeable to Mrs. Cartwright as he would have done to Constance, had he been more fortunate. Charlie Howard, being an extra man, sauntered in by himself, which, by the way, was typical of his journey through life. In arranging the dinner, the hostess had had but one especial end in view—putting Mabel next to Mr. Humphrey. Beyond that she was anxious to please

everyone, having always a due regard to rank, the importance of which she never forgot. She succeeded as well as possible, in view of the fact that there were three men in the party who were in love with the same woman.

"I've been admiring your decorations, Mrs. Cartwright," said the wife of the navy paymaster. "Where did you get your roses? I didn't know there were any to be had in Manila."

"Nor did I," replied her hostess, "until they arrived anonymously, for Constance. She should be the one to explain."

"I have no explanation to offer," said Constance.

"Not even a conjecture, Miss Fairchild?" inquired Howard, tasting his sherry.

"Not even a conjecture. There was no card with them."

"It's usually the flowers which come without a card which require the explanations," observed Mrs. Merrill, playfully, as she began with her soup and noticed the unmistakable flavor of the canned article.

"That rule might apply in the States," said Everton, "but I fancy a card is quite as much of a rarity in these lands as a La France rose."

"Or a beautiful girl to send it to," added the cavalry warrior, gallantly. Constance blushed slightly

and smiled. Mabel felt just a tinge of a feeling which was new and by no means pleasant. It was not of long duration, for the next instant Humphrey turned to her and spoke in an undertone.

"I've got the girl, but I didn't have the gumption to send the flowers. Where do you suppose they come from, and which of the three sent them?" Humphrey had not been so engrossed with his own affair as to remain totally ignorant of what had been going on about him.

Mrs. Merrill broke a piece of bread and waited until a small red ant had issued forth upon the tablecloth before raising it to her lips. "I didn't know that there were any roses here," she remarked to the Colonel, by way of starting the conversation.

"They came on ice from Hongkong," explained Mr. Marcy, unable to keep his secret in the face of so much speculation.

Constance moved one of her wine glasses the fraction of an inch, and a little shadow of disappointment crossed her face. Then she raised her eyes and thanked the Englishman quietly.

"I'm awfully fond of flowers," observed Humphrey, "Aren't you Ma—Miss Cartwright?" He was quick to check the utterance of Mabel's Christian name, but not so quick that Mrs. Cartwright did

not hear him. She shot a rapid glance at her husband, who did not return it, being engrossed with his dinner and Mrs. Merrill. On the whole, Mrs. Cartwright reflected, happily, there was no cause to regret the money which had gone into the champagne. Mrs. Merrill raised to her lips her glass of the carefully iced beverage and wondered how the Cartwrights managed to entertain like this on their income.

Like all affairs which rehearse badly and discourage their managers, the dinner went off remarkably well. Theopilo arose grandly to the occasion and, aside from naming each dish with a grin as he passed it, was guilty of no serious blunders. Everyone appeared to be enjoying the evening, and Charlie Howard went so far as to become involved in a flirtation with the wife of the paymaster; a flirtation in which she met him more than half way.

"If I had known that I could get flowers sent here from Hongkong," said Humphrey, "I would have sent you some."

"You must not do anything of the sort," protested Mabel. "How frightfully extravagant."

"Can't a fellow be extravagant once in his life?" he whispered impressively, gazing down at her. She was looking remarkably well in her evening gown

of white, which showed to advantage her really beautiful neck and arms. Mrs. Cartwright, who was not blind either to her offspring's beauties or defects, glanced at her once or twice during the evening and made up her motherly mind that it was now or never. Certainly Mabel had never looked so well before. There is something which imparts a beauty to the plainest women; it had come to her that night.

She made no reply to his question, which did not require one. She was making a little calculation. If he had graduated from the Military Academy the year before, he must be between twenty-one and twenty-six, and she was forced to admit to herself that he looked nearer the former than the latter age.

"Do you think they will send you away from Manila again soon?" she asked, by way of starting him out of an awkward silence.

"Great Scott! I hope not," he replied dismally. Then he remembered Dagupan, and thought how different it would be under certain circumstances, if she were there too. The Colonel was a nice old chap but he didn't know everything. "I'm ready to go where they send me," he added stoutly, drinking a glass of champagne to fortify himself in this military frame of mind.

"Yes; of course you are," said Mabel. He

glanced at her sideways, taking in his bright new shoulder straps, on which gleamed the single bar. "I do hope this dreadful war will be over soon," she added.

"War is the soldier's opportunity," observed the cavalryman, who had not been a soldier long enough to get over a certain thrill which the very mention of the word "soldier" sent through his healthy young frame. "I hope for a great war some day," he continued magnificently.

"Oh, no! Don't say that!" protested Mabel, with a vague alarm in her eyes, which she raised to his. She had really learned to care for him in these last weeks. Partly because she thought he cared for her and partly because she felt the need of loving some one with a love different from that she gave to her father and mother.

Just then there fell upon the company one of those sudden silences which do fall upon parties, as tho in obedience to some generally recognized signal. In it the wife of the paymaster was heard to remark sadly: "Too often, Mr. Howard, men marry women whom they can't in the least understand."

Howard looked extremely foolish and glanced anxiously at Constance to see if she had heard. Apparently she had not, for she was speaking in an

undertone to Everton. Then he looked at Taylor and that officer had the effrontery to wink at him. The conversation began briskly once more, and the reply of the special correspondent to the spouse of the absent mariner, was heard by her ears alone.

"It's just six weeks to-day," said Constance, "since we met you out by the old fort at Malate. How time flies."

"It does, indeed," Everton agreed gloomily. "I have just received a cable from Hongkong. The machinery for our mills has arrived and I shall go up on the next steamer."

Constance made no reply. During the weeks which had elapsed since that afternoon when he had spoken to her of his hacienda, his manner had puzzled her continually.

There had been things in it which made her believe that his love remained unshaken; moments when she would look up suddenly to find him regarding her with a look which was certainly that of a lover; tones which crept into his voice, in spite of the sincere and honest efforts he made to keep them out of it, and certain gentle, little attentions, from his manner of doing which she had inferred that he had not been in the habit of doing them for other women. Indeed, there were a hundred little signs which indi-

cated that he still loved her, and yet, altho they had been together almost every day, he had spoken no words other than those of a friend. And, woman like, the longer he remained silent, the more anxious she became to have him speak.

"Will you return to Negros, after that?" she inquired.

He hesitated, knowing very well that he ought to go directly from Hongkong with his machinery. Then he reflected that he could as well go south by way of Manila. "No," he said, "I think I shall return here."

"Yes? I hope so," she said simply, and turned to listen to an anecdote which Mr. Marcy was relating.

The conversation of Constance and Everton had not been, of late, of a character calculated to interest them or others. A man can go just so far in his love affair with a woman, without having to be personal. They can talk of books or politics or golf or any other of the themes of ordinary conversation, according to their taste. But the time comes after awhile when the personal rebels and demands to be heard; demands to become the chief topic of conversation, as it has become the chief element in life. If this demand is not acceded to, the conversation suffers. It becomes strained and forced, and split

up by long, awkward silences. This was exactly what had happened to Everton and Constance, and the past ten days had not been very happy ones for either.

Dinner was over at last, at about ten o'clock, and the moment for which Mrs. Cartwright had planned had arrived. They had adjourned to the big hall for coffee, and that matron discovered that she had left her shawl in the summer-house out in the garden.

"Oh!" she exclaimed quite naturally, "Mabel!"

"Yes, mother?" replied Mabel, turning from the window where she and Mr. Humphrey stood looking at the moonlit sea.

"I left my shawl on the bench in the summer house, just before dinner. I wish you'd go and fetch it for me."

The Colonel overheard. "Let me go," he said, innocently, putting down his coffee cup.

"You couldn't find it, Laurence. Whenever I send you for anything of mine, you invariably get the wrong one."

"I don't see how I could very well, in this instance," he replied, genially, "inasmuch as I presume you only left one there."

It seemed to his wife that all the denseness and

stupidity of his life had become concentrated and crowded into this one, well-meant, offer of his services. She was about ready to cry with vexation when, turning, she saw that the young people had disappeared.

"Never mind, dear," she said sweetly. "Mabel has gone for it."

The absence of the young pair was unnoticed by all save Mrs. Cartwright, and, as the moments sped by, and they did not return, she began to feel very like a candidate on election night, when, after weeks of talking himself hoarse, he leans back and awaits the decision of the fates. At length, when more than half an hour had passed, the Colonel observed suddenly:

"It seems to me that those young people are taking a long while to find your shawl."

The remark caused Mrs. Merrill to glance at the clock. It was half past ten, and she had ordered her carriage—which was borrowed for the occasion—for ten. "Dear me! How late it is!" She advanced and pecked Mrs. Cartwright's cheek. In the years that were gone the two women had been stationed together in a frontier Post. "The time has passed so rapidly, my dear."

"Must you go?" inquired Mrs. Cartwright,

sweetly. Humphrey and Mabel came up the stairs carrying the shawl between them.

"Colonel Cartwright, sir, I'd like to speak to you," said the cavalry warrior, when all of the other guests had gone.

"Certainly, my boy," said the Colonel, in a tone of mild surprise. "Suppose we have another cigar? It's early yet."

"We'll bid you good night, then," said Mrs. Cartwright, holding out her hand and noticing that the rose was gone from Mabel's hair.

"Good night, Mrs. Cartwright"—he took the hand of each in turn, growing unaccountably red and dropping his hat upon the floor during the ceremony.

"Good night, Miss Fairchild. Good night, Miss Cartwright." There was a great dignity, and a distant formality in his tone as he spoke the last name, a formality compared to which his manner of addressing her mother had been frivolously intimate.

When the women had left the room there was an awkward silence, during which the Colonel lit his cigar and Humphrey made an unsuccessful attempt to light his, ending by holding it in his hand, being ashamed to ask for another match.

"You haven't bitten the end off," said the Colonel, gravely interested. When this had been done, he

held out the match box again. In a moment the young man was puffing nervously and wondering how to begin. The silence became marked once more.

"Suppose we have a whisky?" exclaimed the Colonel, suddenly. "Ginger ale with it, eh? Theopilo!"

"Delighted!" said the cavalryman. The Colonel poured out two drinks, which were more than masculine and less than excessive; "military" describes them as aptly as a word can. They had adjourned to the den, and when they had drank, the young man summed up courage to begin.

Half an hour later he walked down Calle Real on air and moonlight. Between his lips was one of the Colonel's best cigars, and in his pocket was a La France rose, which had come on ice from Hongkong.

The Colonel, as he sought the apartment which he shared with his spouse, was calculating as to dates. If the young people got married before long, he and Mrs. Cartwright could go home, and get there in time to see all the new plays. Later on, in the Winter, they could go to Italy. He had never been abroad.

When he reached the room Mabel had been and gone. There had been tears. She would have

waited to see her father, but reflected that she would be in time to see Humphrey walk down the street, if she sought her own room, directly she heard their voices in the hall. The atmosphere was still a trifle damp and Mrs. Cartwright was doing something suspicious with a handkerchief.

"Well, Laura!"

"Well, Laurence?"

"She's told you?"

"Of course. I'm her mother."

He crossed to the dressing table and began to remove the eagles from his blouse. "It'll be just a little lonely without her; don't you think so?" he asked at length.

"I don't think I realized before just what the army is," she said. "He's cavalry and you're artillery. It means a total separation."

"Not so bad as that. I dare say it's all for the best."

"She cares for him."

He made no reply. Now that it was actually settled he began to think that possibly things might be a little different when Mabel was gone. They would be alone then, and they were no longer young. He tried to picture to himself what the house would be like with no Mabel; then he recalled what it had

been like before there had been any Mabel. In those days there had not seemed to be the lack of anything, as there was now. Why?

In those days there had been a good deal of foolishness—love making. They were more sensible now, and yet the void would be there. He glanced at his wife, who was arranging some hairpins on her dressing table and looking thoughtfully at the floor. There had been something wrong somewhere, all these years. He was convinced of that. It was her fault too. She had been dictatorial and had not listened to reason. Suddenly it occurred to him that in those old days she had never been so. But then there had been the lovemaking. Could it be possible that, after all, common sense and reason were inferior to foolishness, as guides to life? It was absurd that it should be so and yet—he hadn't been able to reason with her all these years. How would it do to try a little foolishness again?

He crossed the room to where his wife sat and put his hand on her shoulder. "Laura!"

She looked up in surprise. There was something in his manner which was new and yet not new, altogether. "Well?" she asked.

"She doesn't care for him as much as—" he hesitated an instant, as tho he thought that he was

too old for "foolishness." Then he continued boldly, "as I care for you, dear."

For the space of a moment she sat quite still. Then, slowly a soft flush crept over her face and neck; a flush which made her look as she had in the old days, and set him to wondering if Time was not a lie. Then she arose and put her arms about his neck.

When he fell asleep that night, it was with the knowledge that his experiment had been a success.

Chapter XXII

NEWS FROM NEGROS

CAPTAIN TAYLOR had, upon his arrival in Manila two months before, been assigned to quarters in a somewhat dilapidated old Spanish mansion in the district of Ermita. It was a dwelling very much out of repair, and was like the house on Calle Real in that it commanded the same wide view of the bay and the distant shores of Cavite and Corregidor.

Thither the four men had bent their steps on leaving the Cartwrights. It was still early, from a masculine point of view, and the night was just hot enough to make a cold drink acceptable.

"Why didn't young Humphrey come away with us?" inquired Mr. Marcy, when they had chatted awhile.

"He stayed behind to propose to Mabel," explained Howard, putting his feet on the window-sill.

"Do you mean Miss Cartwright?" inquired the Englishman, rather distantly. "I was not aware that he was devoted to her."

"Nor was I," said Howard, "until that little episode of the shawl. I didn't notice that any one kept Mrs. Merrill out in the moonlight for an hour, hunting a shawl."

"They were not gone an hour—really?" asked the Englishman, in surprise. He had not known Howard long enough to make allowances for a little exaggeration.

"I didn't time them," the American admitted.

"You're a nice one to talk," said Taylor, dryly. "I noticed that you were not wasting any time with that little navy woman—what's her name?"

"Agnes."

The reply was greeted by a general laugh. Howard continued to puff contentedly at his cigar. "It's a beautiful night," he remarked, placidly, watching with interest the signals which were being flashed by one of the big men-of-war in the harbor.

"Agnes what?" inquired Everton. "Or didn't it occur to you to ask her surname?"

"Cragin. She's the wife of a paymaster on the 'Nevada.' Her husband's at Nagasaki with his ship."

"Why the devil doesn't she join him, then?" demanded Taylor, bluntly. "Nagasaki's preferable to this hole, as a residence."

"Don't know, I am sure. Probably by the time she got there he'd be off to Chemulpoo. That's how it is in the navy."

"Matrimony isn't always a thing to be desired, for a military man," was Mr. Marcy's comment.

"Nor for a civilian, either," added Taylor. "I know as many happy marriages in the army as I do out of it."

"Ideal life—military life—for a single man," continued Marcy. "I wish I'd gone into the service when I was a youngster," he added.

"Determined to remain a bachelor?" asked Howard, innocently.

Mr. Marcy glanced at him with suspicion. The inference which was obvious to the others, had escaped him. "I have formed no definite views on the subject," he replied coldly.

"Well, I imagine that's equivalent to the same thing. A man who has no definite views on matrimony generally remains single. I dare say young Humphrey's chuck full of definite views by this time. He probably knows more about it than the Colonel."

"If you're so sure about those 'babes in the

woods,' Howard, we might as well drink their health, and felicity, and all that," suggested Taylor.

"With all due respect to the bride that is to be," observed Howard, when the health had been drunk, "I don't see how any one could fall in love with her when there's a beauty like Miss Fairchild around."

No one replied to this observation. Then Taylor said, rather flatly, that beauty was not the only thing for which men married.

"Perhaps not," admitted Howard. "But whatever the other things are, I don't believe Miss Fairchild is lacking in them."

"Miss Cartwright is not beautiful," admitted Marcy, "but she's an extremely nice girl, and I think Humphrey will be devilish lucky if he gets her. I'm not so sure about her. He didn't appear to have an idea in his head, when I was talking to him."

"When a man has been eight months in one of the *barrios* up country, he's ready to marry his grandmother when he gets back to civilization. This is a fine matrimonial market. Let's start an agency, Taylor," Howard continued frivolously.

"I doubt if you could make it pay," said that officer, yawning.

"He certainly isn't marrying her for her looks."

"What would you marry for, Howard?" inquired Taylor, idly.

"Half a million," replied the correspondent, after devoting a moment to consideration. "You men needn't laugh," he continued, "I'd be as good to her as any of you would to a girl you married. I don't see why I should marry for love, anyhow. Love never did anything for me, except to get me into hot water once or twice."

"I couldn't imagine a man's marrying for money," said Taylor.

"I should never have supposed, Howard, that you were the sort of a man to have an ideal woman," said Everton.

"Well, that's just where you are wrong then. I have."

"Describe her," said Marcy, with interest.

"Well," said the correspondent, "I think that a widow, who had been married about two years to a man who beat and neglected her, but who, at the end of that time, died and left her a million, would about fill the bill. There's nothing like getting a woman who has had one unsuccessful venture. She won't expect so much the second time, and she'll be all the more delighted when she gets a man that's good to her."

"What is the million for?" inquired Marcy, densely.

"For Charlie Howard, of course," said the other, regarding him in surprise.

"I don't know that I should care to have a woman whom another man had been beating for two years," said Taylor.

"Tastes differ," admitted Howard. "The taste for a million is one of the very few which don't have to be cultivated, however."

"I shouldn't know what to do with a million, if I had it," said Taylor, thoughtfully.

"I'd guarantee to show you," replied Howard. "You'd resign the first thing."

"Certainly not. I wouldn't give up my profession for ten millions."

"Do you mean it, really?" asked Marcy. "I thought chaps usually resigned from the service when they came into their property."

"Not with us, they don't. I couldn't exist out of the army."

"I have no such sentiment about my profession," said Howard frankly. "I'd stop poking my nose into other people's business and writing ultimatums, or things I know nothing about, to-morrow, if I had money."

"Well; that's the way I feel about the army," said Taylor, briefly.

"I must be off," exclaimed Marcy, looking at his watch.

The men rose to their feet simultaneously. "Don't go just yet," said Taylor to Everton. "I have a letter from Negros which I thought you might like to see. Have a fresh cigar to smoke on the way home," he added, extending the box to the others who were at the door. He followed them to the head of the stairs and returned to find Everton sitting in the window.

"Who is the letter from?"

"From that second lieutenant, who joined us a few days before you were wounded. You never saw very much of him, did you? We will see what he says."

Everton mentally braced himself for that which he felt was coming. Affairs were approaching a climax, and for some reasons he was not sorry. He almost wished, now, that he had told of his marriage at first. These two months of sailing under false colors had not been comfortable ones.

Taylor threw himself into a chair beside the table, and opening the letter, which covered several finely written sheets, began to read aloud.

"Hadn't you better read it to yourself first?" suggested Everton, interrupting him. "There might be something private in it."

"I don't believe so," replied Taylor, simply. "The kid and I have no secrets." Then he turned to the letter and began once more:

"Dear Taylor:

"Since you left this God-forsaken stronghold, things have gone from bad to worse. When I succeeded you in command, they went to the bad, and now they've gone to the worse. Two weeks after your departure, when I was just getting on swimmingly and learning how to command a Post, along came a senior in the person of Major Crompton. As criticism of one's superiors is forbidden by the Regulations (I've been boning Regulations lately), I will content myself with stating a few facts about the Major.

"The night he arrived he revoked all of the standing orders which you left, and which I had maintained. He said he always liked to start like a new broom—with a clean sweep. He also declared that he felt tired and would go to bed early. So he did, at eight o'clock, after drinking pretty nearly a quart of Scotch. Next morning I asked him about the

new orders. Mad? You ought to have seen him! 'I will let you know when I have any orders, sir!' he yelled. 'What the devil is the service coming to when second lieutenants talk about orders!' He got drunk by four in the afternoon, and he's been drunk, off and on, ever since. When he's full he talks about himself, and how Sheridan helped him to win the Civil War, and when he's sober, he gives me Hell for nothing. If it wasn't for the satisfaction of being a hero, I'd resign and get out.

"The worst of it is, that he spoils all chances of any successful operations against the enemy. About two weeks after he came, I tumbled to a peach of a plot in which several of the so-called 'loyal' citizens of this burg were implicated. If it had been properly managed we'd have bagged a hundred rifles. I reported the facts to the Major, and what did he do? Sent out and arrested everybody that was in the conspiracy. Old Ramus came over to call on him and gave him a lot of soft soap. Swore he was loyal and all that. Before he got through telling what a good American he was, the Major and he had finished off a bottle of whisky between them. When the old rebel left, the Major sent for me and gave me rats for preferring charges against reputable citizens. He read me a long lecture on the grave responsibilities of

a commission, and how careful I ought to be not to bring 'groundless charges.'"

"He seems to be having a hard time of it," said Everton, as Taylor paused for breath.

"Yes, indeed; but it may all be the making of him."

"By force of good example?" inquired the other, dryly, beginning to take some enjoyment out of his cigar. If the young officer had written so far without referring to the marriage, it was not unlikely that he might omit doing so. In spite of his being prepared for exposure, Everton instinctively fought for delay. He was inconsistent in small things, as men, who are strong in big ones, not infrequently are.

"No," replied Taylor, "of course not by example. But it isn't a bad thing, sometimes, for a youngster to have a hard man over him. It forces him to do everything so perfectly that the senior has no opportunity to find fault. It's a quick way to make him learn."

"That's all right in theory," replied Everton. "I don't believe in that sort of discipline myself. That it's possible, is one of the lamentable things about the military service."

"Perhaps you're right," admitted Taylor. "I

know I sometimes think that the hazing which goes on at West Point is a bad thing for the army."

"How so? I shouldn't think it would be of any importance after the men graduate."

"Well; it is in this respect. A man who tyrannizes over lower class men at the Academy, will tyrannize over enlisted men after he graduates."

"Hazing isn't tyranny," replied Everton. "But go on with the letter."

"There's only a little more," said Taylor, continuing.

"There is no news of a social nature that I know of, except that our friend Mispall is very devoted to the wife of that man Everton——"

Taylor stopped abruptly and glanced up in amazement. "What does he mean by that?" Everton made no reply. "Are you married?"

"Yes."

The simple monosyllable was spoken quietly and when he had spoken it the man at the window knocked the ashes from his cigar and went on smoking. There was a silence of a moment's duration. Then Taylor spoke again.

"Regularly married—legally?"

"Regularly and legally."

"God!"

The man at the table arose and began to pace rapidly up and down the room.

It seemed to the one at the window that he was more upset by the news than even its remarkable character justified.

"To a native?"

"To the daughter of Señor Paris." After four months of married life, Mercedes was still to him "the daughter of Señor Paris."

Taylor returned to his chair and sinking into it buried his face in his hands. Everton regarded him in amazement.

"What's the matter?" he demanded, abruptly.

Taylor raised his head. "Matter! Why, great God, man, don't you know?" He checked himself suddenly. It was possible that Everton did not know—what he did; having learned it at the cost of many a heartache. His voice sank almost to a whisper. "Is it possible that you don't know?" he repeated, speaking to himself, but audibly.

"Know what?"

Taylor paid no heed to the question. Instead, he leaned back in his chair and knit his brows. He was thinking deeply of one whom this knowledge would

crush. He never for one instant considered himself or the possibility, which would have occurred to many men, that it might react in his own favor. The thing was horrible. It was worse than that. It had in it the elements of a ludicrous farce—a farce in which the proudest and best of women was to be crushed and humbled, ignominiously. This man to whom she had given her love was married to a half-caste. The humiliation of it all was abominable. And he could do nothing, absolutely nothing! Suddenly he realized how he would like to choke and kill the fool at the window, the fool, and worse than fool, whom until five minutes ago he had looked upon as the luckiest man alive. But then, killing would do no good. Was there nothing else?

"It must be a mistake," he protested. "Some beastly joke. You can't be married to a native, Everton, you—a gentleman?"

Everton left the window with a gesture of impatience. "It's quite true, Taylor, and there is no joke about it. I—I'll say good night now, and good-by. I am going back to Negros."

He moved toward the door. Suddenly Taylor put forth his hand and grasped him by the shoulder. Everton raised his head and returned the other's look.

For a moment they stood thus; Taylor reading Everton's face and trying, through it, to read his soul. This man had saved his life. He had made the one woman in all the world love him. He had been a gentleman always, and now he had given the lie to everything in his character. "Why did you do it?" asked the soldier.

As Everton looked into his friend's stern eyes, he recalled how, officer and man, they had shared so many vigils together. It was hard, that in all the world there should be no friend left, whose faith in him was not to be broken. He felt suddenly a wish that in going out of the life to which he belonged, he might leave one behind, in that life, who understood. "Taylor," he said, slowly.

"Well?"

"Will you swear to me on your honor as a man and a soldier never to breathe a word of it, if I tell you?"

"Yes," replied Taylor, simply. "I swear it."

"Then—I married for money; and I had to have the money to save some one from conviction for a crime."

Taylor did not speak at once, but something in his face changed. "One who had a claim on you?"

"The very highest claim, perhaps."

The grip on the shoulder loosened and, glancing down, Everton saw that Taylor's hand was outstretched. Neither spoke as he took it, and when their hands had been clasped for a long moment, Everton quietly picked up his hat.

"Good night."

"Why didn't you come to me?" said Taylor, in a voice which had the note of tears in it. "I've got a little property, and you could have had it all."

"The amount—was thirty thousand dollars, and—I couldn't have taken yours, anyway."

"I haven't anything like that," Taylor admitted, sadly. "But we might have done something, I wish you had come to me."

"I'm the one to suffer, old man." Everton was at the door. The other did not contradict him. "I'm the one it hits, you know. I shan't be able to associate with people, now that it's known," he flushed and laughed nervously. "I'm glad," he went on, "that it's only myself. It would be different, if I had a mother or sisters."

"Yes; it's good that it's only you," said the man who knew.

The man who did not know, went down the stairs, and out into the street.

Chapter XXIII

CONSTANCE

POCO tiempo, Señor," explained Theopilo, with a deep bow.

Everton nodded and turned toward the window. The native withdrew, seeking those domestic regions of the house wherein he was wont to officiate as majordomo, and where he spent the remainder of the morning in doing as little work, in as much time, as possible. And very great feats of laziness are possible to one whose Malay indolence has been accentuated by a Spanish education.

It was only half past ten o'clock, and the man who stood with his eyes fixed on the glassy surface of the harbor, had come at a most unconventional hour. News of a certain kind is noted for the rapidity with which it travels, and he had laid no injunctions as to secrecy upon Taylor, the previous night.

The morning was hot and still, and yet his hands were cold. This was the only external sign he gave of the despair which had settled upon him. In other

respects he, who had tried to school himself to bear all things with the simple, unquestioning fortitude of military discipline, was to outward appearance quite as usual.

He was there to state a fact, because he preferred that she learn it from him, rather than from another, and when he had done so, he would go away. There would be no explanation, of course. That was out of the question. She would feel towards him as a woman of refined sensibilities should, under such circumstances, and she would treat him with a civility which would veil her contempt, at least until he was out of her presence. Indeed, he had, during the long watches of the night, lived through the scene many times. He knew just what to say to her and just what she would reply, and he believed that he had more than discounted all the humiliation that was to be his.

He was calm, with the composure of one who has made up his mind to face injustice, and who, by anticipation, has robbed it of its sting. And then, just at the one moment of his life, when he stood most in need of his composure and his self control, they both deserted him.

Tired of his inspection of the ships which lay at anchor in the bay, he left the window and ap-

proached the big table in the center of the hall. On it were scattered several books and papers, an empty box which had once contained Mabel's chocolates, and, on the side nearest to him, a woman's handkerchief.

Constance Fairchild was one to impress upon the inanimate objects which belonged to her, a distinct personality, which was, as it were, an offshoot of her own. He knew that the delicate little fabric was hers, even before his eyes fell upon the fine embroidered monogram. It suggested all that was womanly and soft and tender, all of the woman in her, for which the man in him had yearned so hopelessly. Suddenly a strong realization of what her love might have been to him, broke in upon his mind through the barriers which his fortitude had erected. In that one moment he realized, for the first time, all the difference that there is between life with the One Woman, and life without her. The primitive forces of his nature, engrossed in a great love, rose up in protest against the long denial. Unconsciously he groaned aloud, and carried the handkerchief to his lips.

It was soft and cool, and yielded no perfume but the faint suggestion of fine linen. He closed his eyes, that by shutting out the sight of all other things

he might revel in the sense of intimacy with her. Then he opened them to find hers fixed upon him with the holiness and gravity of love.

She had entered during that moment when he had been too engrossed with the flood of his emotion, to heed her footstep. He raised his head quickly and dropped his hands to his side, assuming almost the position of "attention." For an instant neither spoke. He had been taken completely by surprise and had no words at his command. Before any came to him she acted upon an impulse as strong and irresistible as his own had been. Advancing a step she stretched out her hand and spoke.

"Then you still care for me, Daniel?"

There is that about the old Biblical names which gives them a wonderful, quaint sweetness on the lips of a woman who loves. A man never really hears his Christian name until it is spoken for the first time by the One Woman. As he heard his now, the scales fell from his eyes, and he knew of that which had been paramount in her life so long. With that knowledge came the thought that this had been brought about by his silence, and he believed that in the gratification of a selfish desire, he had sacrificed her. Gradually, as he saw it all, the color forsook his face, leaving it ashen gray, and he felt the soul

sickness of one who had done a great wrong, unintentionally. Without thinking, he answered her. Indeed, it seemed to him that there was but one answer possible. Now that she had made her unconscious confession, he could not crush her pride by saying "No," and besides, it would be a lie.

"Yes," he said, slowly, in a voice which he scarcely recognized, and which sounded strangely in her ears. It was not the happy declaration of a lover; it was more like the desperate confession of a man driven to bay. She could see from his face that he was suffering, as it is not given to men to suffer for many hours in their lives. She forgot herself utterly in a great desire to help him.

"What is it?" she entreated, coming quite close to him, and looking into his eyes with a look which was part perplexity and anxious fear, but altogether love. "What is it—dear? I——"

He roused himself and put out his hand imploringly. "Stop, for God's sake!"

She recoiled quickly and stood quite still, regarding him with amazement. As she did so there crept into her heart a strange, benumbing fear. He had said that he loved her, and yet there was something here, for which she was totally unprepared. In the agonized face of the man before her, she saw no

happiness, such as she had thought to find there, when she should tell him of her love.

"You must not go on," he continued, hoarsely. "I had no right to tell you. I—I meant to conceal it—always. There is something which you do not know, something I must tell you. I see now that—that I should have done so before, but I—" He broke off suddenly, unable to continue, and turned toward the window.

Without, the water was ablaze with the same glassy surface, and the ships in the harbor looked just as they had done a few minutes before; but everything else in the world was changed.

It had seemed to him, when he had first entered that room and looked out upon that scene, that there was nothing to be added to his cup of bitterness. He had felt that he was beyond the reach of any additional pain. He realized his mistake now. The burden had been heavy enough before, but it had been upon his shoulders then. Now she was to bear her share. He had perhaps deserved his. She had done nothing to merit hers, and, if he read the pride and love of her nature aright, it would crush her, as it had never crushed him.

"Well?" she said, quietly. "Why don't you go on?"

"Well?" she said, quietly.
"Why don't you go on?"

He drew a deep inspiration, keeping his eyes fixed upon the big, black, British cruiser, which lay the farthest out of all the ships.

"I was married," he said, in a hard, dry voice—"I was married four months ago to the daughter of Señor Paris, my business partner."

A thin veil of smoke began to rise from one of the funnels of the big cruiser. He watched it float astern and sink upon the water, for want of a breath of air to carry it upwards. The distant shore-line of Cavite was radiating heat, and Corregidor was dissolving and vanishing in a red haze. A little traveling clock behind him began, suddenly, to tick. That was the only sound.

He did not turn. A certain instinct of his being, which was the instinct of a gentleman, told him not to look at her. The clock ticked on and it seemed to him that each tick represented a year of his life. He grew old rapidly during that moment. At last, when he could endure the silence no longer, he turned.

She was standing with her back to him, one hand resting on the table. "Why didn't you tell me of this before?" she added, quietly. The clock stopped ticking once more.

Of all the questions she could have put to him,

this was, perhaps, the most difficult to answer. After pausing an instant for him to do so, she continued: "It would have been—kinder, if you had done so, I think."

The very gentleness of the reproach wounded him sorely. The dignity of it was what he might have expected. After what she had said, she would make no effort to recall the admission of love which she had made to him, however bitterly she might regret it.

"I did not know—I had no idea that you would ever care. I just wanted to be near you a little longer to have one—last bit of happiness. I——"

"Stop!"

She turned and faced him steadily, with eyes from which all the love had vanished. "Please remember what you told me just now. After that—after that, any words of love from you can be nothing but an insult."

The tone cut him far more than the words. The contempt which he had anticipated was just beginning to manifest itself. He did not intend to accept this attitude without protest, however. The whole situation was damnable enough without her thinking that he wished to speak to her as he had no right to speak.

"You are mistaken," he said, raising his head and regarding her as fearlessly as she had him, for from this imputation, at least, he could clear himself. "You are mistaken. The love of no man, or of no dog, for that matter, is an insult until it begins to demand."

She turned away with a gesture of impatience, and sank upon the big cane divan, clasping her hands and looking steadily away from him towards the window. Then she spoke again.

"I beg your pardon. I only intended to stop you—to prevent your saying that which I did not wish to hear, that was all."

For a long time she sat thus, while he stood by the table watching her. Neither realized how long it was before she spoke again, for the thoughts which crowded through the mind of each, were such as to render them insensible to time.

She thought, first, of what he had just said and her reply; then, of how she had waited so many weeks to hear the very words to which she now refused to listen. She smiled bitterly at this recollection. Already the work of disillusion had begun.

Of all the thoughts which came to him, one was uppermost. This was the last time he should see her. He regarded her steadily with the intensity

with which one stands by the side of a coffin and stares at the features of the beloved dead. There are many things which combine in a man's heart at that moment, pain, protest, the struggle against fate, and the refusal of the soul to believe that it is the last time. All of these were in his heart at that moment.

"If you cared for me, as you say you do," she continued, after a while, "why did you do this thing?"

She had considered well before putting the question. At first the impulse had been to terminate the interview and creep away to her own room, where she could, perhaps, realize in time just what this horror was. Then the same thought came to her that had held him silent. She, too, realized that it was the last time. She could not let him go quite yet. Her love and faith had been too strong for that. There must be some explanation of the hideous contradiction of his professed love for one woman and his marriage with another.

Again, he was silent, for he dare not trust himself to speak lest, by so doing, he should undo all the good —if there was any good—of his sacrifice.

"Was it," she continued, slowly, for, strange to relate, her mind was working rapidly and with pain-

ful clearness. "Was it to further your business interests?"

"Yes," he replied, almost eagerly, for it suddenly occurred to him that the worse his act appeared to her, the better it would be for her, in the end. If her respect for him was killed, the love would not long outlive it. It only made it a little harder for him, and it might make all the difference in life to her. If she knew the truth, or even as much of it as he had told Taylor, she might go on loving to the end of time. It seemed to him that a broken faith was better for her than a hopeless love. Certainly the more contemptible he appeared, the better. "Yes," he repeated, determined to put it as plainly as possible. "I married for money."

He succeeded better than he had thought, for the quick look which passed over her face was one of scorn. So this was the man she had loved; the man in whom she had had put her faith! She recalled another, who had once professed love for her and who had subsequently married a most inferior woman, with money. She remembered the contempt she had felt for him when she heard of it, and now—this was a much worse case. That man had married a gentlewoman, a girl who was in every way his social equal. This one had—not that, surely!

And yet, "he is nearly all Spaniard. His father was a Spanish officer." The words came back to her with a horrible distinctness. Yes, it must be true, this man had not even drawn the color line!

"Your wife," she said, interrogatively, "is a resident of the Philippines?"

"Yes. She is a light mestiza. Her father took me into partnership." When he made up his mind to do a thing, Daniel Everton did it thoroughly.

She turned her face towards the window once more. Again the little clock began to tick audibly. Everton picked up his hat.

"I will say good-by," he said, quietly.

The little clock had a monopoly of all the noise in the room for awhile. It was a longer time than she had thought, as she sat there, making no reply, and giving no sign. Then she aroused herself and turned. The little clock had ticked away four minutes. Everton was gone.

Chapter XXIV

ON THE SLOPES OF CANALOAN

FAR below, in the valley by the sea, there was already a faint tinge of dawn, by the light of which the hacienda laborers, waking, were just able to distinguish a difference between the greenish gloom of the sugar lands and the bluish gloom of the sea; far above, on the very crest of the hills, there was a flush spreading, a flush which told of the sunrise back behind the mountains of Cebu. But between, in the heavy forests which stretch down the sides of Canaloan, the night was still of the blackest and the life of the jungle was still asleep.

In this opaque darkness, at a point half-way between the last hacienda mill of the low country, and the crest of the hills, a small detachment of soldiers were halted, awaiting the dawn. Somewhere, on their right, which was the south, they could hear the faint roaring of the Bago River as it coursed through a gorge; above them there was only the barking of

the tree lizards to make more intense the deep silence of the tropic night.

By degrees, as the soft flush on the mountain-crest deepened and spread downward, the waters of the Bago came out of the darkness in a grayish, restless foam, while above, the stars grew fainter.

Suddenly, there came a low melodious note from the branches of a lofty tree which stood just by the river's bank. It was a call, half mournful at first, and then, as it echoed down the gorge, it rippled off into a soft melody, more tender than the finest notes of a flute. It was the jungle reveille.

In the adjoining tree, there was a brown mass of something, from which there hung suspended several long, dark tails. At the first note of the low, sweet call, the mass stirred. A head was lifted and there was a great chattering as the father monkey, being in no hurry to arise, burrowed his way back into the family mass. It was cold up there in the mountains, and the family as a unit gives warmth.

But the stealthy approach of another day was not to be denied. As the gray river and sky merged into the warmer tints of sunrise, the call was answered, far and wide, from a hundred feathered throats. It was not all musical now. The discordant voices had awakened as well as the others, and

the shrill scream of a big, white cockatoo drowned the softer notes of nature's trumpeter.

Then the air changed slowly. On the eastern slopes of Negros, the sun was already shining warmly and steadily; the warmth passed with the light across the mountain tops and down into the gorge beyond. As the damp chill left the air the brown mass in the tree dissolved into four units. The father swung himself from the tree, by arm and tail, and landed on a great stone beside the clear river. Just below him there was a little basin of crystal, in which the waters curled slowly, slowly around. The old monkey leaned over and drank, regarding his reflection curiously.

The noises were many now. It was nature's breakfast hour. The two little brown ones were taking their meal without stirring from the warm, snug attitude in which they had passed the night. The birds were flitting about in search of food, and high up on the slopes of Canaloan a dozen wild caribou came out into a clearing and began to graze.

To the north, on the hill where the soldiers were, the dawn came more slowly. It was never more than a dull twilight in there, even on the brightest mid-days, and now, long before the first dull tinge stole in, the men had warning of its approach in the

sounds of awakening life, which floated up to them from the gorge, drowning the faint roaring of the river.

The soldiers, who sat shivering in the trail, were the first white men to push so far northward beyond Pandanaong, and to them the dawn came slowly.

As it began to lighten, the Second Lieutenant gave a whispered command, and the detachment moved forward in single file preceded by a prisoner, a Bibbillane, who had been captured down at the foot of the hills, the night before and impressed as a guide. He marched with bound arms, a short cord running from his wrists to the man from Tennessee, who drove him much as he might a horse. The path was a trail which no one but the prisoner could have followed. When they had been marching a half hour, the native stopped abruptly.

"Seege!" growled the Tennesseean.

The Bibbillane gave a guttural exclamation and jerked his head significantly towards the jungle on the right. They looked up and saw through a break in the trees, a bit of distant sky, like the setting of a window frame, right across the center of which arose a thin column of white smoke.

The Second Lieutenant and Cassidy advanced a few feet further down the trail. There they stood for a

moment in whispered conference, and then the men behind saw them drop upon their hands and knees and crawl away into the brush, in the direction of the clearing.

They were gone a very long time, and when they returned the jungle was quite gray, which meant that, out in the open slopes beyond, the sun was shining.

At a sign from the Second Lieutenant, Sergeant Redder advanced and made a third in the conference, which lasted several minutes longer. Then the three returned together and the force of thirty was quickly divided. The young officer led the way to the right, half the men, among whom was Cassidy, following him and crawling through the dense underbrush.

Redder, with the other half of the detachment, moved on down the trail for fifty yards or so, until they neared the open. He halted here and placed his little force just at the edge of the clearing, in which there were three crude barracks of nipa, and an irregular line of trenches.

"What are the ordahs, Sarjunt?" whispered the Tennesseean, eagerly.

"To geeb your moud shud," grunted Redder, explicitly.

When the snub had had time to have a proper disciplinary effect, the German condescended to give further instructions. Creeping along the line, he divided his force into three parts, to each of which he assigned a nipa shack. "I vill give de gommand 'fire' ven de Loodenunt fires his virst shot; dake an easy aim, aboud at de floor and vaid ready. Dere vill pe no varnin', mindt, joost de gommand to 'fire!' De range is boint blank, an' effery man order hid de house, vat as peen assigned to 'im. Lie as flad as you gan, for ven dey shood, dey'll shood mosdly dis vay. No talgin, mindt."

The men obeyed and lay waiting. As the moments dragged, the Tennesseean saw a chicken fly down from the roof of one of the nipa houses, and begin to feed. He wondered vaguely whether it would be scared by the firing and hide in the thicket, where he would be unable to find it afterward.

Meanwhile it seemed to the other party that they must have lost their way. The crawl was interminable and exhausting. Their clothing was wet through with the heavy dew which clung to the grass and leaves, and their faces were cut with the brambles, and yet the thoughts which ran through the Second Lieutenant's mind, as they struggled laboriously on, were of a most agreeable nature.

Here, at last, was his opportunity, for which he had waited a very long year. He was about to enter his first fight and in command. The fates had been indeed kind to him. Major Crompton had received an order two days before to repair to Iloilo and sit upon a court-martial. The command of the Silay detachment consequently devolved upon the junior, and the following day Benita had appeared with a letter from Mispall. That was at four o'clock in the afternoon; six hours afterward they had marched out of Silay and had been marching ever since.

The long crawl was over at last and they neared the clearing. Peering through the few feet of brush which still intervened, the young officer made a survey of the field.

They were now in the rear of the trenches, on the flank toward the west, and the garrison, with one exception, appeared to be asleep. The exception was a solitary sentry who had been stationed at one end of the long line of trenches. He sat with his back toward them and his rifle across his knees. At the moment he was engaged in rolling a cigarette.

"Fire!"

So perfectly had Sergeant Redder kept his men in hand, that the two volleys rang out all but simultaneously. Their fire crossed just in front of the

houses and riddled all three pitilessly. The sentry stopped rolling his cigarette and lay upon his back, staring upward with a half smile, his eyes fixed meaninglessly upon the sun, which rose just then above the bamboo brake across the clearing.

"Forward!"

The fifteen men tumbled, pell mell, out of the jungle brush and into the first trench. There was no opposition there. The greater part of the enemy's force of seventy odd had been sleeping under, and behind, the three little houses. At the first volley, at least a third fled wildly into the jungle and down the slope beyond. The others fell into the center trench and began an erratic fire at will, in the direction of Redder's force. They were forty odd in number, and strangely enough had, at the first moment, no suspicion that the real attack was on their flank.

Creeping to the juncture of the two trenches, the Second Lieutenant grouped his men carefully and poured a murderous magazine fire into their disordered mass.

"L" Company's bugler now sounded "Commence firing," and as the clear notes rose above the sharp rattling of the rifles, Redder's men began a deliberate and careful fire at will, their bullets just grazing

the center trench. The combined fire was irresistible and the enfilade was complete.

There was one among the enemy who seemed to be in command and who could be heard shouting orders in Spanish and Visayan. Under this leader, what remained of the force retreated to the third and last trench. This was their final stand. Beyond there was the jungle, through which pursuit would be impossible. The trench had been built with more skill than the others and ran almost at right angles with the one which had been enfiladed the moment before, and into which the Second Lieutenant now poured his little force. It was the happiest moment of the young man's life.

"Cease firing!"

The call rang out and conveyed its message to Redder, as the fifteen men under the Second Lieutenant were crouched in the enemy's trench.

The plan of action had carried admirably. Not a man had suffered from the wild firing of the insurgents, and Redder was even now moving his force rapidly toward a point where they could sweep the short open space between the last trench and the safety of the dense brush beyond.

The Second Lieutenant paused for breath, as there was a moment's lull in the action.

One final charge from the flank, and then the third trench would be carried and the day won. So far it had been absurdly easy.

The Second Lieutenant had planned that little engagement with a skill which promised well for his future as an officer. Had he been as old as Cassidy, or had he followed his usual custom of conferring with that soldier as to the next move, he might have lived to do great things for his country some day. But there is a reckless enthusiasm which comes to young men at the moment of success in battle and leads them to mar victory by over confidence and carelessness. It came to the Second Lieutenant then.

It was ridiculous to prolong this action. "Strike while the iron was hot." That was a good motto. He reloaded his revolver.

"Fix bayonets!"

The fifteen bayonets sprang into their places with a sound they had never had on the parade ground in front of the Silay church. Things do sound differently when they are done in earnest. The young man's eyes were blazing with a strange light. "Forward," he shouted, and sprang upon the embankment.

Just one hundred per cent. of the men behind him

were there as soon as he was, and a few seconds later they were pouring their fire direct into the last trench. But in those few seconds a fairly directed volley was poured into their midst by the enemy's force, which was now reduced to some twelve men. The Second Lieutenant sank upon one knee.

"Give 'em hell, boys! Take command, Sergeant Cassidy, enfilade——!"

The last words died faintly away in the sharp magazine fire of the fifteen rifles. Redder's guns spoke next, as the fragment of the enemy, dropping all efforts at anything but self preservation, darted across the open space. Two of them fell and the others gained the shelter of the wood.

"Sound th' assimbly!" shouted Cassidy. "Cease firing!"

There was no assembly sounded. "L" Company's bugler was dead.

Five minutes had elapsed. Cassidy had thrown out a hurried cordon of sentinels around the little enclosure to guard against a possible counter attack, but there was no indication that one would be made.

Those of the enemy who had not escaped lay in the trenches huddled together in pools of blood.

The Americans who had not been posted as sen-

tinels were grouped in the shade of a banana tree. In the center of the group lay the Second Lieutenant. He was staring at the tree tops with an expression of almost boyish bewilderment on his face.

"Am I very badly hit, Sergeant?" he asked, faintly. It had all happened so suddenly, at the last.

Cassidy did not answer, for the words were choking him. The commanding officer had changed his status in the last few minutes. He was a boy now, to the hard-featured men who stood about him with moist eyes. He could have been Cassidy's son.

"It's pretty bad, Lootenant," said the Tennesseean, when the question had remained so long unanswered that the boy looked at them with a faint, sick fear. He did not hear the reply clearly. Everything seemed away off, and the roaring of the river, which was not audible to the other men, began in his ears and was just as it had been during the long hours of the night, when they had crouched waiting.

The roaring deepened and grew more bold, for the current of the river was running fast. He smiled slightly, and turned his head to one side in an attitude of listening. After a long silence, during which his face had grown white, he spoke again: "Sergeant," he said. "Sergeant!"

As Cassidy answered, the tears which had been restrained so long, fell openly.

"I think that's the Bago, Sergeant," the boy muttered.

The men, of one accord, took off their hats and stood with bowed heads. "Ah, Gawd, if we'd only a surgeon," said Cassidy, passionately. "It might——"

"Couldn't nohow, Sarjunt," said the Tennesseean. "Look!" He pointed with his hand, and Cassidy, following the gesture, saw.

There was no need to speak in whispers now. The roaring of the river drowned all other sounds. It was a broader and a deeper river than the Bago, and he was drawing very near to its banks.

Then something happened which was spoken of in whispers among the men of "L" Company for long afterward. The young soldier's eyes had been dull and almost glazed. They now became suddenly bright, with a brightness which some of the men subsequently declared was not of this world. He raised his right hand sharply to where the brown hair was showing under the rim of his soiled, campaign hat.

"Sir!" he said in a voice as clear as it had been an hour before; "Sir! I have the honor to report——"

The hand relaxed first, then the whole body, and there was a quick gasp, as he rolled over into Cassidy's arms. They put the hat over his face to shield it from the strong rays of the sun and stood about for a few moments in silence. The Second Lieutenant of "L" Company had reported for duty with his last command.

The spectacle which greeted Cassidy's eyes when he entered the larger of the three shacks a few minutes later, was one which it is not best to dwell upon in any detail. It had been crowded with sleeping men an hour before, not one of whom had escaped.

Cassidy, hardened as he was, sickened at the sight and hurriedly left the hut.

"Go into thim shacks, some av you min," he said, "and bring out th' dead. Move lively now. Oi want to sthart back directly."

Several of the soldiers went to do his bidding. The man from Tennessee entered the smallest one and came out again a moment later, bearing something in his arms. He brought it and laid it in silence at Cassidy's feet.

Mercedes had never looked more fair in her life than she did as she lay there, her luxuriant dark

hair falling in profusion over her shoulders. There was a small, round hole just over the right eye, from which the blood had trickled down the soft cheek and begun to congeal. Had it not been for that, she might have seemed quietly sleeping.

The two men regarded each other questioningly. Cassidy was sorely troubled.

"How did it happen?" he asked at length. "Benita said she wuz at th' hacienda whin we left, an' I told her not to let her lave."

The Tennesseean knit his brows. "José musta brung her up heah last night, by the short trail. Ah found this in yander, so Ah reckon they wuz together, Sarjunt."

The Irishman took Mispall's big straw hat and threw it into the smouldering embers of the camp fire. Then he glanced once more at the sweet, gentle face of Mercedes, and said softly, for in the roughest men there is found, sometimes, the greatest delicacy, "Niver moind that, now, poor gurl; an' don't tell th' others."

The Tennesseean nodded and the other men came crowding around, staring in blank amazement at the dead girl. They asked a dozen questions, to no one of which Cassidy condescended to reply. At length, when their surprise had somewhat abated, a sudden

painful silence fell upon them; the mind of each was filled with the same unpleasant query. Finally Cassidy voiced it. "Thank Gawd," he said, slowly, "no wan knows who done it."

"Amen, Sarjunt," said the Tennesseean, guiltily. He knew where he had fired, at the corner of the building, and he also knew where he had found the body of Mercedes.

There is a spot in the little clearing, just where the jungle slopes off, toward the westward, and over which Canaloan mounts eternally, a silent, brooding guard. As the sun rises over the eastern slopes of Murcia Pass, it strikes here first.

It was at this point that they laid Mercedes and the Second Lieutenant and "L" Company's bugler, side by side. Then, when all was ready, the men fell in, in double ranks, facing toward the gorge.

Chapter XXV

MARSHALL EVERTON

CONSTANCE FAIRCHILD was alone in the library of a very old house, in a neighborhood from whence most of its dignified contemporaries had departed. It was after dinner, and, as she approached the window fronting upon the deserted street, her loneliness partook of a character which it had worn frequently of late. It was a passive acceptance of loneliness and an acquiescence in the decree of Fate, which pointed out a long stretch of years, made up of lonely evenings, and said, "This is your future!"

There was a cushioned divan in the window, and, seating herself upon it, she leaned toward the cold glass and gazed thoughtfully at the scene without. It was in keeping with her position and her humor. There was no one in sight and the snow was falling softly and steadily, deepening upon the pavements with a white carpet and rapidly obliterating the tracks

of the solitary vehicle which had passed since four o'clock that afternoon.

Those who live too much alone grow fanciful. She likened the cold, empty silence of the scene to her own life, and shivered slightly. Then, leaving the window, she crossed to a great leather armchair in front of the fire, sank into it, and fell to regarding the cheerful glowing of the coals.

It is not unlikely that the sudden loss of a great hope is a worse blow than the loss of a possessed reality. Under the most favorable of conditions, realities are apt to be tempered with disillusion, and their loss is less severe than the loss of the hope which preceded them, to the extent of that disillusion. In Constance Fairchild's case, the hope had existed so long, and with such good reason, that it had given her almost as clear a title to the happiness it promised, as actual possession.

More than a year had passed since that last morning in Manila, when her hope had died, and try as she might, she had not been able to bury it. All of the more violent emotions carry with them their own reaction. She had been, at the first, so utterly sickened and disgusted with the revelation which Daniel Everton had made to her, that it had seemed as tho she must forget him speedily. In those first

days, she had prayed for strength to keep her from despising him too much. Latterly, the prayers had been, that she might forget him and throw off the influence he was exercising over her life and thoughts. These prayers had remained unanswered.

Whenever she reviewed in her mind that last interview, she experienced a renewal of the scorn and contempt which she had then felt for him; and yet, at odd moments, the other memories came back and intruded upon her, whose mind should have been occupied solely with the recollection of his one despicable act. When she thought of him deliberately, which was but seldom, she dwelt upon his marriage; when she thought of him involuntarily, which was often, it was of his courage on the field and of the many other things about him which she had learned to love.

As the months had passed, she had grown to think of him as two persons—separate and distinct. The one, the man she had loved and believed in, the soldier, the gentleman; the other, the man as he had shown himself on that last horrible morning. Sometimes she would awake at night and imagine that that morning had been a dream. She recalled how unusually hot and stifling it had been and how unreal the sunlight. Surely, she would think, as

she lay in the quiet and darkness of her western home, that heat and that intense, white sunlight could never have had a real existence. It was all a horrible nightmare.

Then those nights would have other thoughts, such that, when she reverted to them the next day, they would bring a flush of self-disdain to her face. It seemed that she was deteriorating; that she had grown, morally, less erect; because, when his presence was unusually strong upon her, she would have to check herself in the act of wishing that, since he had to marry for money, Fate had given him to her. She could have elevated him, and perhaps the good that was in him would have overcome the one sordid characteristic. She was not perfect, herself, and not strong always; she began to realize that now, Perhaps he had been sorely tried by poverty and need. So, in the long watches of the night, she would find excuses for him, and then, in the bright, clear light of the next day, she would despise herself for having found them.

In certain respects, animals are more fortunate than human beings. They have an instinct and they follow it. Men have an instinct; but they also have a judgment, and the two are not always on friendly terms. They had been at odds in Constance Fair-

child's breast for months. Instinct told her to love Everton; judgment, to despise him. She obeyed both, sometimes alternately and sometimes together, and the result was a continuous quarrel within the domestic circle of the soul, which was infinitely harder to endure than the most rasping ones within that of the family.

As she sat ruminating upon the future, Constance wondered if she had not made a mistake in planning her life along such independent lines. Perhaps it would have been better if she had followed the more usual convention, commanded by the world for spinsters in her position, and taken some elderly duenna to live with her. She had not done so, being no believer in artificial relationships, and her brother was still in the Philippines.

She aroused herself with a slight effort and picked up a book from the table at her side, prepared to pass this evening as she had passed so many of late. As she opened its pages, however, there was a loud ring at the door and she glanced up in surprise. It was ten o'clock and a call at that hour, from any source, was most unusual. "Not at home, Stevens," she said, and returned to her book.

The front door opened and there was a sweep of cold, damp air. Then followed a moment's whis-

pered conference, after which Stevens appeared once more at the door of the library. "It's Mr. Everton's man, miss, and he says it's something most particular. He has a message for you."

"Show him in."

"Good evening, Miss Fairchild," said John, brokenly. "Thank you fer seein' me." She glanced at him quickly. The man was laboring under some strong, emotional excitement. His eyes were red, and she saw that he had been crying.

"What is it?" she asked, encouragingly.

"Mr. Everton, miss, is a-sinkin' fast—has been for two days now, and it looks like he couldn't hold out over night. This afternoon he was took with a fit of wanderin' like, in his head. Didn't know nobody, an' kept a-askin' for you an' Mr. Daniel."

Constance did not speak immediately, and looking at her, the servant fancied that her face was hard and unsympathetic. He was surprised, for he had expected his appeal to meet with an immediate response. After a moment's hesitation, he added, entreatingly, "I think that if you was to hear him, miss, you'd go. He can't last much longer, an' it's downright pitiful, the way he's been a-askin' for you."

The hardness in Constance's eyes had not been for

Marshall Everton. She hastened to speak, and in her voice the old servant noted an accent of real distress. "Of course I'll go," she said, "at once. But where is Mr. Daniel?"

"I don't know, miss. I wrote him long ago that Mr. Everton was a-failin', and took the liberty of expressing my opinion as how he wouldn't last the year out. I've never had no answer an' it's time one came now—that is, if he'd written prompt like, when he got my letter."

Constance gave a slight gesture of impatience. She had heard enough of Daniel Everton. Her heart went out in sympathy to the old father, who was dying alone. She touched a bell on the little table, and Stevens, who had been waiting outside the door, answered the summons. "Call a cab," she said, briefly. "I'll go back with you," she added, to John.

Marshall Everton's shrunken form had wasted away, until what lay beneath the blankets was but the frame of a man. His face had not changed greatly, and his eyes shone with an unusual and quite unnatural brightness. As Constance sat beside him, waiting for consciousness to return, his mind wandered feebly, and he kept repeating two names. One

was "Martha," which had not been on his lips of late years, and the other was "Daniel."

There had been others on those blue-gray lips that evening. Some of them names which John, who sat crying softly in the back of the room, had never heard, and John had been in the Everton family for twenty years. Of all the little company upon whom the old man called, his son and Constance were the only ones who could have answered. Marshall Everton had reached that age when death signifies not a going away to leave, but a coming home to join.

The trained nurse moved softly about the bed, passing her hand over the old man's brow. The front door closed and a footstep was heard on the stairs; the step of a heavy man who had learned to walk softly. A moment later a physician, whom Constance had never seen, came and stood by the bed. He looked gravely at Mr. Everton and nodded.

"No nourishment?" to the nurse.

"None—since noon, sir."

"Ah." He turned and spoke to Constance. "Has nothing been heard from the son?" he asked, accepting her presence without comment.

"Daniel! Daniel!" said Mr. Everton, faintly.

She shook her head, striving to keep back the tears. She felt that if the son had only been there

then, she could have forgiven him all the rest. She was of a nature to forgive all, save this desertion of the old and dying.

The physician retired to the next room, where Constance could hear him conversing in a low, cheerful tone with the nurse. From the fact that he remained, she judged that the end must be near.

When Mr. Everton had been silent for several minutes, breathing heavily, he rallied somewhat and spoke again, this time more coherently. "Daniel," he said, "forgive me." He began to drum feebly with his hands upon the coverlet, just as he had been used to do in health. Constance recognized the little gesture and thought of the day, so very long ago, when she and Mrs. Cartwright had called upon him, and he had drummed upon the arm of his chair.

"Daniel," he continued, after a pause. "I wish you to explain to Miss Fairchild. She would not prosecute an old man, Daniel, and I am old. It was an error in judgment, an error in judgment and I——"

The sentence ended in a few muttered words, the meaning of which she could not gather. She was leaning forward now, listening intently. Suddenly he caught his breath with a sound which brought John across the room. The sound was not repeated

and the regular breathing was resumed. Mr. Everton turned his head and fixed his eyes upon Constance. He tried to rise upon his pillow.

"Miss Fairchild!"

She knelt quickly by his side and slipped her arm about his neck. "I am here, Mr. Everton," she said.

"Yes," he answered, regarding her intently. "You have been here now for several weeks. I thank you for coming. Had I known where you were stopping, I should have called. I can scarcely see you. Will you come a little closer, please? I have been indisposed and cannot move readily."

Her face was within a few inches of his own. She drew yet nearer and he sank his voice to a whisper. "There is something I wish to tell you."

"Yes? What is it?"

The hurried eager tone startled him, apparently, for he drew back quickly. "I owe you nothing—nothing—NOTHING!" The voice was raised now, almost to a scream, which brought in the nurse and doctor from the other room. By an effort, Marshall Everton raised himself upon his elbow. "Understand," he said, clearly, "I owe you nothing. It was all made good by the sacrifice of my son. The accounts balance. Do you hear? They balance!"

He sank back exhausted, and there was a heavy

silence in the room. After waiting a moment, the nurse and doctor once more withdrew.

It was now after one o'clock, and what little remained of Marshall Everton's vitality was ebbing rapidly. The moments dragged slowly and the thin white hands began to stiffen and grow cold. At two o'clock there was a last returning flicker of soul within the emaciated frame and he spoke again; this time so faintly that Constance alone, heard, and as she did so it all grew clear to her.

"Daniel made good the deficit," he murmured, placidly. "Miss Fairchild has nothing to forgive." A look of contentment came to his face as he spoke, to be replaced, directly, by one of appealing misery. "Daniel is the one to forgive. Oh my boy! my boy!"

There was a long silence. Then he said again, piteously, "Forgive me, Daniel. Forgive——"

Constance leaned over and placed her lips close to his ear. "He forgives you," she said, earnestly. "He forgives you."

The troubled look passed instantly from his face, and he spoke again quite clearly. "That is all I require," he replied, closing his eyes. On his face was the look of a man who, as far as this world is concerned, has made and submitted his account.

The physician looked at his watch. It was half past two, and Mr. Everton had been dead five minutes. Under the circumstances, and in view of the fact that there were no relatives of the deceased present, that was a long time to devote to respectful silence while the soul of the old man sped on its journey. Constance arose from the cramped position in which she had passed nearly an hour, and descended to the little study where the man upstairs had been wont to pass his evenings. There was a fire in the grate and in front of it Mr. Everton's easy-chair. Sinking into this, she sat, going over again and again the words which had been spoken but a few minutes before. "Daniel made good the deficit. It is he who should forgive."

It did not take long for her to understand, and, in the degree in which she had despised Daniel Everton before, she now regretted the injustice she had done him. It was very good to know that, after all, she had not been mistaken in him. She could go on loving him now, and it would be a great happiness. She sighed slightly, and then, realizing that it was time for her to go, arose and turned toward the door.

Daniel Everton was standing on its threshold, regarding her in amazement.

Chapter XXVI

CONCLUSION

WHAT are you doing here?" he asked, closing the door and coming forward. He wore the traveling suit in which he had crossed the continent and his overcoat. She noticed that he did not offer her his hand.

"I came because your father sent for me."

"My father! Is he awake? I'll go to him at once."

As he was leaving the room, she said something, but what it was she was never, thereafter, able to recall. It caused him to pause and turn toward her, courteously.

"Haven't you been upstairs?" she asked.

"No. I have only just arrived. How is he?"

"I don't think you had better go up just now," she said, searching for words in which to tell him. The people in the room above were walking heavily about and slamming doors. He heard a wagon stop in front of the house, and, crossing to the window, raised the shade. Then he knew.

"When did it happen?" he asked, quietly.

"At half past two. He spoke of you at the last." Everton made no reply, and after a moment she added, "I must go now."

"It was very good of you to come. Is your carriage here?"

She saw that he had no intention of admitting her to his sorrow. "It is waiting," she said, crossing to the door. He stepped ahead and opened it for her. In a moment she would be gone and she might never tell him that she understood, and ask him to pardon the injustice she had done him. "I don't expect to see you again, and before I go, I want you to know that—that—I know."

He started and turned toward her, his hand on the knob of the door. "That you know?" he asked, searchingly.

"Yes. He told me just before he died, and I want you to forgive me for the injustice I did you. It was all such a horrible mistake and—so unnecessary."

He closed the door quickly and stood facing her, a sudden light springing into his eyes; a light of hope which changed the whole character of his face. "And you don't blame me?"

"No. It was a mistake, but you—I don't blame

you." She returned his look and then her eyes fell. She regretted what she saw in his, regretted it because of what stood between them. She feared lest he should forget that barrier and say something which she would, in after years, be sorry to have heard. In love, entire confidence does not come at the very first. "Your wife?" she said. "Is she with you?"

He came a step nearer. "My wife," he replied, "has been dead for more than a year."

When a great sorrow and a great joy come simultaneously into a life, the joy submerges and drowns the sorrow. In the moments which followed, Marshall Everton's death was forgotten.

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